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History of

A S T O R I A;

OR,

ENTERPRISE BEYOND

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

BY WASHINGTON IRVING.

AUTHOR OF "THE SKETCH BOOK," "THE ALHAMBRA," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the course of occasional visits to Canada many years since, I became intimately acquainted with some of the principal partners of the great North-West Fur Company, who at that time lived in genial style at Montreal, and kept almost open house for the stranger. At their hospitable boards I occasionally met with partners, and clerks, and hardy fur traders from the interior posts; men who had passed years remote from civilized society, among distant and savage tribes, and who had wonders to recount of their wide and wild peregrinations, their hunting exploits, and their perilous

adventures and hairbreadth escapes among the Indians. I was at an age when the imagination lends its colouring to every thing, and the stories of these Sinbads of the wilderness made the life of a trapper and fur trader perfect romance to me. I even meditated at one time a visit to the remote posts of the company in the boats which annually ascended the lakes and rivers, being thereto invited by one of the partners; and I have ever since regretted that I was prevented by circumstances from carrying my intention into effect. From those early impressions, the grand enterprises of the great fur companies, and the hazardous errantry of their associates in the wild parts of our vast continent, have always been themes of charmed interest to me; and I have felt anxious to get at the details of their adventurous expeditions among the savage tribes that peopled the depths of the wilderness.

About two years ago, not long after my return from a tour upon the prairies of the far

west, I had a conversation with my friend Mr. John Jacob Astor, relative to that portion of our country, and to the adventurous traders to Santa Fé and the Columbia. This led him to advert to a great enterprise set on foot and conducted by him, between twenty and thirty years since, having for its object to carry the fur trade across the Rocky Mountains, and to sweep the shores of the Pacific.

Finding that I took an interest in the subject, he expressed a regret that the true nature and extent of his enterprise and its national character and importance had never been understood, and a wish that I would undertake to give an account of it. The suggestion struck upon the chord of early associations, already vibrating in my mind. It occurred to me that a work of this kind might comprise a variety of those curious details, so interesting to me, illustrative of the fur trade; of its remote and adventurous enterprises, and of the various people, and tribes, and castes, and characters,

civilized and savage, affected by its operations. The journals, and letters also, of the adventurers by sea and land employed by Mr. Astor in his comprehensive project, might throw light upon portions of our country quite out of the track of ordinary travel, and as yet but little known; I therefore felt disposed to undertake the task, provided documents of sufficient extent and minuteness could be furnished to me. All the papers relative to the enterprise were accordingly submitted to my inspection. Among them were journals and letters narrating expeditions by sea, and journeys to and fro across the Rocky Mountains by routes before untravelled, together with documents illustrative of savage and colonial life on the borders of the Pacific. With such materials in hand, I undertook the work. The trouble of rummaging among business papers, and of collecting and collating facts from amidst tedious and commonplace details, was spared me by my nephew, Pierre M. Irving, who acted as my pioneer,

and to whom I am greatly indebted for smoothing my path and lightening my labours.

As the journals, on which I chiefly depended, had been kept by men of business, intent upon the main object of the enterprise, and but little versed in science, or curious about matters not immediately bearing upon their interests, and as they were written often in moments of fatigue or hurry, amid the inconveniences of wild encampments, they were often meagre in their details, furnishing hints to provoke rather than narratives to satisfy inquiry. I have, therefore, availed myself occasionally of collateral lights, supplied by the published journals of other travellers who have visited the scenes described: such as Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, Bradbury, Breckenridge, Long, Franchere, and Ross Cox, and make a general acknowledgment of aid received from these quarters.

The work I here present to the public, is necessarily of a rambling and somewhat disjointed nature, comprising various expeditions

and adventures by land and sea. The facts, however, will prove to be linked and banded together by one grand scheme, devised and conducted by a master spirit; one set of characters, also, continues throughout, appearing occasionally, though sometimes at long intervals, and the whole enterprise winds up by a regular catastrophe; so that the work, without any laboured attempt at artificial construction, actually possesses much of that unity always sought after in works of fiction, and considered so important to the interest of every history.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Sept. 1836.

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ASTORIA.

CHAPTER I.

OBJECTS OF AMERICAN ENTERPRISE—GOLD HUNTING AND FUR TRADING—THEIR EFFECT ON COLONIZATION—EARLY FRENCH CANADIAN SETTLERS—OTTAWA AND HURON HUNTERS—AN INDIAN TRADING CAMP—COUREURS DES BOIS, OR RANGERS OF THE WOODS—THEIR ROAMING LIFE—THEIR REVELS AND EXCESSES—LICENSED TRADERS—MISSIONARIES—TRADING POSTS—PRIMITIVE FRENCH CANADIAN MERCHANT—HIS ESTABLISHMENT AND DEPENDANTS—BRITISH CANADIAN FUR MERCHANT—ORIGIN OF THE NORTH-WEST COMPANY—ITS CONSTITUTION—ITS INTERNAL TRADE—A CANDIDATE FOR THE COMPANY—PRIVATIONS IN THE WILDERNESS—NORTH-WEST CLERKS—NORTH-WEST PARTNERS—A NORTH-WEST NABOB—FEUDAL NOTIONS IN THE FORESTS—THE LORDS OF THE LAKES—FORT WILLIAM—ITS PARLIAMENTARY HALL AND BANQUETING-ROOM—WASSAILING IN THE WILDERNESS.

Two leading objects of commercial gain have given birth to wide and daring enterprise in the early history of the Americans; the precious metals of the south, and the rich peltries of the north. While the fiery and magnificent

2 GOLD HUNTING AND FUR TRADING.

Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, has extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the cool and calculating Briton, have pursued the less splendid, but no less lucrative, traffic in furs amidst the hyperborean regions of the Canadas, until they have advanced even within the Arctic circle.

These two pursuits have thus in a manner been the pioneers and precursors of civilization. Without pausing on the borders, they have penetrated at once, in defiance of difficulties and dangers, to the heart of savage countries: laying open the hidden secrets of the wilderness; leading the way to remote regions of beauty and fertility that might have remained unexplored for ages, and beckoning after them the slow and pausing steps of agriculture and civilization.

It was the fur trade, in fact, which gave early sustenance and vitality to the great Canadian provinces. Being destitute of the precious metals, at that time the leading objects of

American enterprise, they were long neglected by the parent country. The French adventurers, however, who had settled on the banks of the St. Lawrence, soon found that in the rich peltries of the interior, they had sources of wealth that might almost rival the mines of Mexico and Peru. The Indians, as yet unacquainted with the artificial value given to some descriptions of furs, in civilized life, brought quantities of the most precious kinds and bartered them away for European trinkets and cheap commodities. Immense profits were thus made by the early traders, and the traffic was pursued with avidity.

As the valuable furs soon became scarce in the neighbourhood of the settlements, the Indians of the vicinity were stimulated to take a wider range in their hunting expeditions; they were generally accompanied on these expeditions by some of the traders or their dependants, who shared in the toils and perils of the chase, and at the same time made themselves acquainted with the best hunting and trapping grounds, and with the remote tribes, whom they en-

couraged to bring their peltries to the settlements. In this way the trade augmented and was drawn from remote quarters to Montreal. Every now and then a large body of Ottawas, Hurons, and other tribes who hunted the countries bordering on the great lakes, would come down in a squadron of light canoes, laden with beaver skins, and other spoils of their year's hunting. The canoes would be unladen, taken on shore, and their contents disposed in order. A camp of birch bark would be pitched outside of the town, and a kind of primitive fair opened with that grave ceremonial so dear to the Indians. An audience would be demanded of the governor-general, who would hold the conference with becoming state, seated in an elbow chair, with the Indians ranged in semicircles before him, seated on the ground, and silently smoking their pipes. Speeches would be made, presents exchanged, and the audience would break up in universal good humour.

Now would ensue a brisk traffic with the merchants, and all Montreal would be alive.

with naked Indians running from shop to shop bargaining for arms, kettles, knives, axes, blankets, bright-coloured cloths, and other articles of use or fancy ; upon all which, says an old French writer, the merchants were sure to clear at least two hundred per cent. There was no money used in this traffic, and, after a time, all payment in spirituous liquors was prohibited, in consequence of the frantic and frightful excesses and bloody brawls which they were apt to occasion.

Their wants and caprices being supplied, they would take leave of the governor, strike their tents, launch their canoes, and ply their way up the Ottawa to the lakes.

A new and anomalous class of men gradually grew out of this trade. These were called *coureurs des bois*, rangers of the woods ; originally men who had accompanied the Indians in their hunting expeditions and made themselves acquainted with remote tracts and tribes ; and who now became, as it were, pedlers of the wilderness. These men would set out from Montreal with canoes well stocked with goods,

with arms and ammunition, and would make their way up the mazy and wandering rivers that interlace the vast forests of the Canadas, coasting the most remote lakes, and creating new wants and habitudes among the natives. Sometimes they sojourned for months among them, assimilating to their tastes and habits with the happy facility of Frenchmen; adopting in some degree the Indian dress, and not unfrequently taking to themselves Indian wives.

Twelve, fifteen, eighteen months would often elapse without any tidings of them, when they would come sweeping their way down the Ottawa in full glee, their canoes laden down with packs of beaver skins. Now came their turn for revelry and extravagance. "You would be amazed," says an old writer, already quoted, "if you saw how lewd these peddlers are when they return; how they feast and game and how prodigal they are not only in their clothes, but upon their sweethearts. Such of them as are married have the wisdom to retire to their own houses; but the bachelors act just as an East Indiaman and pirates are wont

to do; for they lavish, eat, drink, and play all away as long as the goods hold out; and when these are gone, they even sell their embroidery, their lace, and their clothes. This done they are forced upon a new voyage for subsistence.”*

Many of these *coureurs des bois* became so accustomed to the Indian mode of living, and the perfect freedom of the wilderness, that they lost all relish for civilization, and identified themselves with the savages among whom they dwelt, or could only be distinguished from them by superior licentiousness. Their conduct and example gradually corrupted the natives, and impeded the works of the Catholic missionaries, who were at this time prosecuting their pious labours in the wilds of Canada.

To check these abuses, and to protect the fur trade from various irregularities practised by these loose adventurers, an order was issued by the French government prohibiting all persons, on pain of death, from trading into the interior of the country without a licence.

* La Hontan, v. i., let. 4.

These licences were granted in writing by the governor-general, and at first were given only to persons of respectability; to gentlemen of broken fortunes; to old officers of the army who had families to provide for; or to their widows. Each licence permitted the fitting out of two large canoes with merchandise for the lakes, and no more than twenty-five licences were to be issued in one year. By degrees, however, private licences were also granted, and the number rapidly increased. Those who did not choose to fit out the expeditions themselves, were permitted to sell them to the merchants; these employed the *coureurs de bois*, or rangers of the woods, to undertake the long voyages on shares, and thus the abuses of the old system were revived and continued.*

* The following are the terms on which these expeditions were commonly undertaken. The merchant holding the licence would fit out the two canoes with a thousand crowns worth of goods, and put them under the conduct of six *coureurs des bois*, to whom the goods were charged at the rate of fifteen per cent. above the ready money price in the colony. The *coureurs des bois*, in their turn dealt so sharply with the savages, that they generally returned at the end of a year or so, with four canoes well laden, so as to ensure a clear profit of seven hundred per

The pious missionaries employed by the Roman Catholic church to convert the Indians, did every thing in their power to counteract the profligacy caused and propagated by these men in the heart of the wilderness. The Catholic chapel might often be seen planted beside the trading house, and its spire surmounted by a cross, towering from the midst of an Indian village on the banks of a river or a lake. The missions had often a beneficial effect on the simple sons of the forest, but had little power over the regénades from civilization.

At length it was found necessary to establish fortified posts at the confluence of the river and lakes for the protection of the trade, and the restraint of these profligates of the wilderness.

cent., insomuch that the thousand crowns invested, produced eight thousand. Of this extravagant profit the merchant had the lion's share. In the first place he would set aside six hundred crowns for the cost of his licence, then a thousand crowns for the cost of the original merchandise. This would leave six thousand four hundred crowns from which he would take forty per cent. for bottomry, amounting to two thousand five hundred and sixty crowns. The residue would be equally divided among six wood rangers, who would thus receive little more than six hundred crowns for all their toils and perils.

The most important of these was at Michilimackinac, situated at the strait of the same name, which connects lakes Huron and Michigan. It became the great interior mart and place of deposit, and some of the regular merchants, who prosecuted the trade in person, under their licences, formed establishments here. This, too, was a rendezvous for the rangers of the woods, as well those who came up with goods from Montreal as those who returned with peltries from the interior. Here new expeditions were fitted out and took their departure for lake Michigan and the Mississippi; lake Superior and the north-west; and here the peltries brought in return were embarked for Montreal.

The French merchant at his trading post, in these primitive days of Canada, was a kind of commercial patriarch. With the lax habits and easy familiarity of his race, he had a little world of self-indulgence and misrule around him. He had his clerks, canoe-men, and retainers of all kinds, who lived with him on terms of perfect sociability, always calling him by his christian

name; he had his harem of Indian beauties, and his troop of half-breed children; nor was there ever wanting a louting train of Indians, hanging about the establishment, eating and drinking at his expense in the intervals of their hunting expeditions.

The Canadian traders, for a long time, had troublesome competitors in the British merchants of New York, who inveigled the Indian hunters and the *coureurs des bois*, to their posts, and traded with them on more favourable terms.

A still more formidable opposition was organized in the Hudson Bay Company, chartered by Charles II., in 1670, with the exclusive privilege of establishing trading houses on the shores of that bay and its tributary rivers; a privilege which they have maintained to the present day. Between this British Company and the French merchants of Canada, feuds and contests arose about alleged infringements of territorial limits, and acts of violence and bloodshed occurred between their agents.

In 1762, the French lost possession of Canada, and the trade fell principally into the

hands of British subjects. For a time, however, it shrunk within narrow limits. The old *coureurs des bois* were broken up and dispersed, or, where they could be met with, were slow to accustom themselves to the habits and manners of their British employers. They missed the freedom, indulgence, and familiarity of the old French trading houses, and did not relish the sober exactness, reserve, and method of the new comers. The British traders, too, were ignorant of the country, and distrustful of the natives. They had reason to be so. The treacherous and bloody affairs of Detroit and Michilimackinac showed them the lurking hostility cherished by the savages, who had too long been taught by the French to regard them as enemies.

It was not until the year 1766, that the trade regained its old channels; but it was then pursued with much avidity and emulation by individual merchants, and soon transcended its former bounds. Expeditions were fitted out by various persons from Montreal and Michilimackinac, and rivalships and jealousies of

course ensued. The trade was injured by their artifices to outbid and undermine each other; the Indians were debauched by the sale of spirituous liquors, which had been prohibited under the French rule. Scenes of drunkenness, brutality, and brawl were the consequence, in the Indian villages and around the trading houses, while bloody feuds took place between rival trading parties when they happened to encounter each other in the lawless depths of the wilderness.

To put an end to these sordid and ruinous contentions, several of the principal merchants of Montreal entered into a partnership in the winter of 1783, which was augmented by amalgamation with a rival company in 1787. Thus was created the famous "North-west Company," which for a time held a lordly sway over the wintry lakes and boundless forests of the Canadas, almost equal to that of the East India Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient.

The company consisted of twenty-three shareholders, or partners, but held in its employ

about two thousand persons as clerks, guides, interpreters, and “voyageurs,” or boatmen. These were distributed at various trading posts, established far and wide on the interior lakes and rivers, at immense distances from each other, and in the heart of trackless countries and savage tribes.

Several of the partners resided in Montreal and Quebec, to manage the main concerns of the company. These were called agents, and were personages of great weight and importance; the other partners took their stations at the interior posts, where they remained throughout the winter, to superintend the intercourse with the various tribes of Indians. They were thence called wintering partners.

The goods destined for this wide and wandering traffic were put up at the warehouses of the company in Montreal, and conveyed in batteaux, or boats, and canoes, up the river Attawa, or Ottawa, which falls into the St. Lawrence, near Montreal, and by other rivers and portages, to lake Nipising, lake Huron, lake Superior, and thence, by several chains of great

and small lakes, to lake Winipeg, lake Athabasca, and the great Slave lake. This singular and beautiful system of internal seas, which renders an immense region of wilderness so accessible to the frail bark of the Indian or the trader, was studded by the remote posts of the company, where they carried on their traffic with the surrounding tribes.

The company, as we have shown, was at first a spontaneous association of merchants; but, after it had been regularly organized, admission into it became extremely difficult. A candidate had to enter, as it were, "before the mast," to undergo a long probation, and to rise slowly by his merits and services. He began, at an early age, as a clerk, and served an apprenticeship of seven years, for which he received one hundred pounds sterling, was maintained at the expense of the company, and furnished with suitable clothing and equipments. His probation was generally passed at the interior trading posts; removed for years from civilized society, leading a life almost as wild and precarious as the savages around him; exposed to the se-

verities of a northern winter, often suffering from a scarcity of food, and sometimes destitute for a long time of both bread and salt. When his apprenticeship had expired, he received a salary according to his deserts, varying from eighty to one hundred and sixty pounds sterling, and was now eligible to the great object of his ambition, a partnership in the company ; though years might yet elapse before he attained to that enviable station.

Most of the clerks were young men of good families, from the Highlands of Scotland, characterized by the perseverance, thrift, and fidelity of their country, and fitted by their native hardihood to encounter the rigorous climate of the north, and to endure the trials and privations of their lot ; though it must not be concealed that the constitutions of many of them became impaired by the hardships of the wilderness, and their stomachs injured by occasional famishing, and especially by the want of bread and salt. • Now and then, at an interval of years, they were permitted to come down on a visit to the establishment at

Montreal, to recruit their health and to have a taste of civilized life; and these were brilliant spots in their existence.

As to the principal partners, or agents, who resided in Montreal and Quebec, they formed a kind of commercial aristocracy, living in lordly and hospitable style. Their early associations, when clerks at the remote trading posts, and the pleasures, dangers, adventures, and mishaps, which they had shared together in their wild wood life, had linked them heartily to each other, so that they formed a convivial fraternity. Few travellers that have visited Canada some thirty years since, in the days of the M'Tavishes, the M'Gillivrays, the M'Kenzies, the Frobishers, and the other magnates of the northwest, when the company was in all its glory, but must remember the round of feasting and revelry kept up among these hyperborean nabobs.

Sometimes one or two partners, recently from the interior posts, would make their appearance in New York, in the course of a tour of pleasure and curiosity. On these occasions

there was always a degree of magnificence of the purse about them, and a peculiar propensity to expenditure at the goldsmiths and jewellers, for rings, chains, brooches, necklaces, jewelled watches, and other rich trinkets, partly for their own wear, partly for presents to their female acquaintances; a gorgeous prodigality, such as was often to be noticed in former times in southern planters and West Indian creoles, when flush with the profits of their plantations.

To behold the North-west Company in all its state and grandeur, however, it was necessary to witness an annual gathering at the great interior place of conference established at Fort William, near what is called the Grand Portage, on lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded once a year, to meet the partners from the various trading posts of the wilderness, to discuss the affairs of the company during the preceding year, and to arrange plans for the future.

On these occasions might be seen the change since the unceremonious times of the old French traders; now the aristocratical character

of the Briton shone forth magnificently, or rather the feudal spirit of the Highlander. Every partner who had charge of an interior post, and a score of retainers at his command, felt like the chieftain of a Highland clan, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependants as of himself. To him a visit to the grand conference at Fort William was a most important event; and he repaired there as to a meeting of parliament.

The partners from Montreal, however, were the lords of the ascendant; coming from the midst of luxurious and ostentatious life, they quite eclipsed their compeers from the woods, whose forms and faces had been battered and hardened by hard living and hard service, and whose garments and equipments were all the worse for wear. Indeed, the partners from below considered the whole dignity of the company as represented in their persons, and conducted themselves in suitable style. They ascended the rivers in great state, like sovereigns making a progress: or rather like Highland chieftains navigating their subject lakes. They

were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian voyageurs, as obedient as Highland clansmen. They carried up with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and abundance of choice wines for the banquet which attended this great convocation. Happy were they, too, if they could meet with some distinguished stranger, above all, some titled member of the British nobility, to accompany them on this stately occasion, and grace their high solemnities.

Fort William, the scene of this important annual meeting, was a considerable village on the banks of lake Superior. Here, in an immense wooden building, was the great council hall, as also the banqueting chamber, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur trade. The house swarmed at this time with traders and voyagers, some from Montreal, bound to the interior posts; some from the interior posts, bound to Montreal. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in

parliament, and every retainer and dependant looked up to the assemblage with awe, as to the house of lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation, and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation.

These grave and weighty councils were alternated by huge feasts and revels, like some of the old feasts described in Highland castles. The tables in the great banqueting-room groaned under the weight of game of all kinds; of venison from the woods, and fish from the lakes, with hunters' delicacies, such as buffaloes' tongues, and beavers' tails; and various luxuries from Montreal, all served up by experienced cooks brought for the purpose. There was no stint of generous wine, for it was a hard-drinking period, a time of loyal toasts, and bacchanalian songs, and brimming bumpers.

While the chiefs thus revelled in hall, and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish songs, chanted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a

mongrel legion of retainers, Canadian voyageurs, half breeds, Indian hunters, and vagabond hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without on the crumbs that fell from their table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties, mingled with Indian yelps and yellings.

Such was the North-west Company in its powerful and prosperous days, when it held a kind of feudal sway over a vast domain of lake and forest. We are dwelling too long, perhaps, upon these individual pictures, endeared to us by the associations of early life, when, as yet a stripling youth, we have sat at the hospitable boards of the "mighty North-westers," then lords of the ascendant at Montreal, and gazed with wondering and inexperienced eye at their baronial wassailing, and listened with astonished ear to their tales of hardships and adventures. It is one object of our task, however, to present scenes of the rough life of the wilderness, and we are tempted to fix these few memorials of a transient state of things fast passing into oblivion;—for the feudal state of Fort William is at an end; its council chamber is silent and

deserted; its banquet hall no longer echoes to the burst of loyalty, or the "auld world" ditty; the lords of the lakes and forests have passed away; and the hospitable magnates of Montreal—where are they!

CHAPTER II.

RISE OF THE MACKINAW COMPANY—ATTEMPT OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO COUNTERACT FOREIGN INFLUENCE OVER THE INDIAN TRIBES—JOHN JACOB ASTOR—HIS BIRTHPLACE—HIS ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES—WHAT FIRST TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE FUR TRADE—HIS CHARACTER, ENTERPRISES, AND SUCCESS—HIS COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT—ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN FUR COMPANY.

THE success of the North-west Company stimulated further enterprise in this opening and apparently boundless field of profit. The traffic of that company lay principally in the high northern latitudes, while there were immense regions to the south and west, known to abound with valuable peltries; but which, as yet, had been but little explored by the fur trader. A new association of British merchants was therefore formed, to prosecute the trade in this direction. The chief factory was esta-

blished at the old emporium of Michilimackinac, from which place the association took its name, and was commonly called the Mackinaw Company.

While the North-westerners continued to push their enterprises into the hyperborean regions from their stronghold at Fort William, and to hold almost sovereign sway over the tribes of the upper lakes and rivers, the Mackinaw Company sent forth their light perogues and barks, by Green bay, Fox river, and the Wisconsin, to that great artery of the west, the Mississippi; and down that stream to all its tributary rivers. In this way they hoped soon to monopolize the trade with all the tribes on the southern and western waters, and of those vast tracts comprised in ancient Louisiana.

The government of the United States began to view with a wary eye the growing influence thus acquired by combinations of foreigners, over the aboriginal tribes inhabiting its territories, and endeavoured to counteract it. For this purpose, as early as 1796, the government sent out agents to establish rival trading houses

on the frontier, so as to supply the wants of the Indians; to link their interests and feelings with those of the people of the United States, and to divert this important branch of trade into national channels.

The expedient, however, was unsuccessful, as most commercial expedients are prone to be, where the dull patronage of government is counted upon to outvie the keen activity of private enterprise. What government failed to effect, however, with all its patronage and all its agents, was at length brought about by the enterprise and perseverance of a single merchant, one of its adopted citizens; and this brings us to speak of the individual, whose enterprise is the especial subject of the following pages—a man whose name and character are worthy of being enrolled in the history of commerce, as illustrating its noblest aims and soundest maxims. A few brief anecdotes of his early life, and of the circumstances which first determined him to the branch of commerce of which we are treating, cannot but be interesting.

John Jacob Astor, the individual in question, was born in the honest little German village of Waldorf, near Heidelberg, on the banks of the Rhine. He was brought up in the simplicity of rural life, but, while yet a mere stripling, left his home, and launched himself amid the busy scenes of London, having had, from his boyhood, a singular presentiment that he would ultimately arrive at great fortune.

At the close of the American Revolution he was still in London, and scarce on the threshold of active life. An elder brother had been for some few years resident in the United States, and Mr. Astor determined to follow him, and to seek his fortunes in the rising country. Investing a small sum which he had amassed since leaving his native village, in merchandise suited to the American market, he embarked, in the month of November, 1783, in a ship bound to Baltimore, and arrived in Hampton Roads in the month of January. The winter was extremely severe, and the ship, with many others, was detained by the ice in and about Chesapeake bay for nearly three months.

During this period, the passengers of the various ships used occasionally to go on shore, and mingle sociably together. In this way Mr. Astor became acquainted with a countryman of his, a furrier by trade. Having had a previous impression that this might be a lucrative trade in the new world, he made many inquiries of his new acquaintance on the subject, who cheerfully gave him all the information in his power, as to the quality and value of different furs, and the mode of carrying on the traffic. He subsequently accompanied him to New York, and, by his advice, Mr. Astor was induced to invest the proceeds of his merchandise in furs. With these he sailed from New York to London in 1784, disposed of them advantageously, made himself further acquainted with the course of the trade, and returned the same year to New York, with a view to settle in the United States.

He now devoted himself to the branch of commerce with which he had thus casually been made acquainted. He began his career, of course, on the narrowest scale; but he brought

to the task a persevering industry, rigid economy, and strict integrity. To these were added an aspiring spirit that always looked upward; a genius bold, fertile, and expansive; a sagacity quick to grasp and convert every circumstance to its advantage, and a singular and never wavering confidence of signal success.”*

As yet, trade in peltries was not organized in the United States, and could not be said to form a regular line of business. Furs and skins were casually collected by the country traders in their dealings with the Indians or the white hunters, but the main supply was derived from Canada. As Mr. Astor's means increased, he made annual visits to Montreal, where he purchased furs from the houses at that place engaged in the trade. These he shipped from

* An instance of this buoyant confidence, which no doubt aided to produce the success it anticipated, we have from the lips of Mr. A. himself. While yet almost a stranger in the city, and in very narrow circumstances, he passed by where a row of houses had just been erected in Broadway, and which, from the superior style of their architecture, were the talk and boast of the city. “I'll build, one day or other, a greater house than any of these, in this very street,” said he to himself. He has accomplished his prediction.

Canada for London, no direct trade being allowed from that colony to any but the mother country.

In 1794 or 1795, a treaty with Great Britain removed the restrictions imposed upon the trade with the colonies, and opened a direct commercial intercourse between Canada and the United States. Mr. Astor was in London at the time, and immediately made a contract with the agents of the North-west Company for furs. He was now enabled to import them from Montreal into the United States for the home supply, and to be shipped thence to different parts of Europe, as well as to China, which has ever been the best market for the richest and finest kinds of peltry.

The treaty in question provided, likewise, that the military posts occupied by the British within the territorial limits of the United States, should be surrendered. Accordingly, Oswego, Niagara, Detroit, Michilimackinac, and other posts on the American side of the lakes, were given up. An opening was thus made for the American merchant to a trade on the confines

of Canada, and within the territories of the United States. After an interval of some years, about 1807, Mr. Astor embarked in this trade on his own account. His capital and resources had by this time greatly augmented, and he had risen from small beginnings to take his place among the first merchants and financiers of the country. His genius had ever been in advance of his circumstances, prompting him to new and wide fields of enterprise beyond the scope of ordinary merchants. With all his enterprise and resources, however, he soon found the power and influence of the Michilimackinac (or Mackinaw) Company too great for him, having engrossed most of the trade within the American borders.

A plan had to be devised to enable him to enter into successful competition. He was aware of the wish of the American government, already stated, that the fur trade within its boundaries should be in the hands of American citizens, and of the ineffectual measures it had taken to accomplish that object. He now offered, if aided and protected by government,

to turn the whole of that trade into American channels. He was invited to unfold his plans to government, and they were warmly approved, though the executive could give no direct aid.

Thus countenanced, however, he obtained in 1809, a charter from the legislature of the state of New York, incorporating a company under the name of "The American Fur Company," with a capital of one million of dollars, with the privilege of increasing it to two millions. The capital was furnished by himself—he, in fact, constituted the company; for, though he had a board of directors, they were merely nominal; the whole business was conducted on his plans, and with his resources, but he preferred to do so under the imposing and formidable aspect of a corporation, rather than in his individual name, and his policy was sagacious and effective.

As the Mackinaw Company still continued its rivalry, and as the fur trade would not advantageously admit of competition, he made a new arrangement in 1811, by which, in conjunction with certain partners of the Northwest Company, and other persons engaged in

the fur trade, he bought out the Mackinaw Company, and merged that and the American Fur Company into a new association, to be called "The South-west Company." This he likewise did with the privity and approbation of the American government.

By this arrangement Mr. Astor became proprietor of one half of the Indian establishments and goods which the Mackinaw Company had within the territory of the Indian country in the United States, and it was understood that the whole was to be surrendered into his hands at the expiration of five years, on condition that the American company would not trade within the British dominions.

Unluckily, the war which broke out in 1812, between Great Britain and the United States, suspended the association; and, after the war, it was entirely dissolved; congress having passed a law prohibiting British fur traders from prosecuting their enterprises within the territories of the United States.

CHAPTER III.

FUR TRADE IN THE PACIFIC—AMERICAN COASTING VOYAGES—RUSSIAN ENTERPRISES—DISCOVERY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER—CARVER'S PROJECT TO FOUND A SETTLEMENT THERE—MACKENZIE'S EXPEDITION—LEWIS AND CLARKE'S JOURNEY ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS—MR. ASTOR'S GRAND COMMERCIAL SCHEME—HIS CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SUBJECT WITH MR. JEFFERSON—HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NORTH-WEST COMPANY—HIS STEPS TO CARRY HIS SCHEME INTO EFFECT.

WHILE the various companies we have noticed were pushing their enterprises far and wide in the wilds of Canada, and along the course of the great western waters, our adventurers, intent on the same objects, were traversing the watery wastes of the Pacific and skirting the north-west coast of America. The last voyage of that renowned but unfortunate discoverer, Captain Cook, had made known the vast quantities of the sea otter to be found along that

coast, and the immense prices to be obtained for its fur in China. It was as if a new gold coast had been discovered. Individuals from various countries dashed into this lucrative traffic, so that in the year 1792, there were twenty-one vessels under different flags, plying along the coast, and trading with the natives. The greater part of them were American, and owned by Boston merchants. They generally remained on the coast, and about the adjacent seas for two years, carrying on as wandering and adventurous a commerce on the water as did the traders and trappers on land. Their trade extended along the whole coast from California to the high northern latitudes. They would run in near shore, anchor, and wait for the natives to come off in their canoes with peltries. The trade exhausted at one place, they would up anchor and be off to another. In this way they would consume the summer, and when autumn came on, would run down to the Sandwich islands and winter in some friendly and plentiful harbour. In the following year they would resume their summer trade, commencing

at California and proceeding north; and, having in the course of two seasons, collected a sufficient cargo of peltries, would make the best of their way to China. Here they would sell their furs, take in teas, nankeens, and other merchandize, and return to Boston, after an absence of two or three years.

The people, however, who entered most extensively and effectively in the fur trade of the Pacific, were the Russians. Instead of making casual voyages, in transient ships, they established regular trading houses in the high latitudes, along the north-west coast of America, and upon the chain of the Aleutian islands between Kamtschatka and the promontory of Alaska.

To promote and protect these enterprises, a company was incorporated by the Russian government with exclusive privileges, and a capital of two hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling; and the sovereignty of that part of the American continent, along the coast of which the posts had been established, was claimed by the Russian crown, on the plea that

the land had been discovered and occupied by its subjects.

As China was the grand mart for the furs collected in these quarters, the Russians had the advantage over their competitors in the trade. The latter had to take their peltries to Canton, which, however, was a mere receiving mart, from whence they had to be distributed over the interior of the empire and sent to the northern parts, where there was the chief consumption. The Russians, on the contrary, carried their furs, by a shorter voyage, directly to the Northern parts of the Chinese empire; thus being able to afford them in the market without the additional cost of internal transportation.

We now come to the immediate field of operation of the great enterprise we have undertaken to illustrate.

Among the American ships which traded along the north-west coast in 1792, was the *Columbia*, Captain Gray, of Boston. In the course of her voyage she discovered the mouth of a large river in lat. $46^{\circ} 19'$ north. Entering it

with some difficulty, on account of sand bars and breakers, she came to anchor in a spacious bay. A boat was well manned, and sent on shore to a village on the beach, but all the inhabitants fled, excepting the aged and infirm. The kind manner in which they were treated, and the presents given to them, gradually lured back the others, and a friendly intercourse took place. They had never seen a ship or a white man. When they had first descried the Columbia, they had supposed it a floating island; then some monster of the deep; but when they saw the boat putting for shore with human beings on board, they considered them cannibals sent by the great Spirit to ravage the country and devour the inhabitants. Captain Gray did not ascend the river farther than the bay in question, which continues to bear his name. After putting to sea, he fell in with the celebrated discoverer, Vancouver, and informed him of his discovery, furnishing him with a chart which he had made of the river. Vancouver visited the river, and his lieutenant, Broughton, explored it by the aid of Captain Gray's chart; ascending

it upwards of one hundred miles, until within view of a snowy mountain, to which he gave the name of Mount Hood, which it still retains.

The existence of this river, however, was known long before the visits of Gray and Vancouver, but the information concerning it was vague and indefinite, being gathered from the reports of Indians. It was spoken of by travellers as the Oregon, and as the great river of the west. A Spanish ship is said to have been wrecked at its mouth, several of the crew of which lived for some time among the natives. The Columbia, however, is believed to be the first ship that made a regular discovery and anchored within its waters, and it has since generally borne the name of that vessel.

As early as 1763, shortly after the acquisition of the Canadas by Great Britain, Captain Jonathan Carver, who had been in the British provincial army, projected a journey across the continent between the forty-third and forty-sixth degrees of northern latitude, to the shores of the Pacific ocean. His objects were to ascertain the breadth of the continent at its

broadest part, and to determine on some place on the shores of the Pacific, where government might establish a post to facilitate the discovery of a north-west passage, or a communication between Hudson's-bay and the Pacific ocean. This place he presumed would be somewhere about the straits of Annian, at which point he supposed the Oregon disembogued itself. It was his opinion, also, that a settlement on this extremity of America would disclose new sources of trade, promote many useful discoveries, and open a more direct communication with China and the English settlements in the East Indies, than that by the Cape of Good Hope or the straits of Magellan.* This enterprising and intrepid traveller was twice baffled in individual efforts to accomplish this great journey. In 1774, he was joined in the scheme by Richard Whitworth, a member of Parliament, and a man of wealth. Their enterprise was projected on a broad and bold plan. They were to take with them fifty or sixty men, artificers and mariners. With these they were

* Carver's Travels, Introd., p. iii. Philad. 1796.

to make their way up one of the branches of the Missouri, explore the mountains for the source of the Oregon, or river of the west, and sail down that river to its supposed exit near the straits of Annian. Here they were to erect a fort, and build the vessels necessary to carry their discoveries by sea into effect. Their plan had the sanction of the British government, and grants and other requisites were nearly completed, when the breaking out of the American revolution once more defeated the undertaking.*

The expedition of Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1793, across the continent to the Pacific ocean, which he reached in lat. $52^{\circ} 20' 48''$, again suggested the possibility of linking together the trade of both sides of the continent. In lat. $52^{\circ} 30'$ he had descended a river for some distance which flowed towards the south, and was called by the natives Tacoutche Tesse, and which he erroneously supposed to be the Columbia. It was afterwards ascertained that it emptied itself in lat. $49'$, whereas the mouth of

* Carver's Travels, p. 360. Philad. 1796.

the Columbia is about three degrees further south.

When Mackenzie some years subsequently published an account of his expeditions, he suggested the policy of opening an intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and forming regular establishments through the interior and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands. By this means, he observed, the entire command of the fur trade of North America might be obtained from latitude 48' north to the pole, excepting that portion held by the Russians, for as to the American adventurers who had hitherto enjoyed the traffic along the north-west coast, they would instantly disappear, he added, before a well regulated trade.

A scheme of this kind, however, was too vast and hazardous for individual enterprise; it could only be undertaken by a company under the sanction and protection of a government; and as there might be a clashing of claims between the Hudson's Bay and the North-west Company, the one holding by right of charter, the other

by right of possession, he proposed that the two companies should coalesce in this great undertaking. The long cherished jealousies of these two companies, however, were too deep and strong to allow them to listen to such council.

In the mean time the attention of the American government was attracted to the subject, and the memorable expedition under Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, fitted out. These gentlemen, in 1804, accomplished the enterprise which had been projected by Carver and Whitworth, in 1774. They ascended the Missouri, passed through the stupendous gates of the Rocky mountains, hitherto unknown to white man; discovered and explored the upper waters of the Columbia, and followed that river down to its mouth, where their countryman, Gray, had anchored about twelve years previously. Here they passed the winter, and returned across the mountains in the following spring. The reports published by them of their expedition, demonstrated the practicability of establishing a line

of communication across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean.

It was then that the idea presented itself to the mind of Mr. Astor, of grasping with his individual hands this great enterprise, which for years had been dubiously yet desirously contemplated by powerful associations and maternal governments. For some time he revolved the idea in his mind, gradually extending and maturing his plans as his means of executing them augmented. The main feature of his scheme was to establish a line of trading posts along the Missouri and the Columbia, to the mouth of the latter, where was to be founded the chief trading house or mart. Inferior posts would be established in the interior, and on all the tributary streams of the Columbia, to trade with the Indians; these posts would draw their supplies from the main establishment, and bring to it the peltries they collected. Coasting craft would be built and fitted out, also, at the mouth of the Columbia, to trade, at favourable seasons, all along the north-west coast and return, with

the proceeds of their voyages, to this place of deposite. Thus all the Indian trade, both of the interior and the coast, would converge to this point, and thence derive its sustenance.

A ship was to be sent annually from New York to this main establishment with re-enforcements and supplies, and with merchandize suited to the trade. It would take on board the furs collected during the preceding year, carry them to Canton, invest the proceeds in the rich merchandize of China, and return thus freighted to New York.

As, in extending the American trade along the coast to the northward, it might be brought into the vicinity of the Russian Fur Company, and produce a hostile rivalry, it was part of the plan of Mr. Astor to conciliate the good will of that company by the most amicable and beneficial arrangements. The Russian establishment was chiefly dependant for its supplies upon transient trading vessels from the United States. These vessels, however, were often of more harm than advantage. Being owned by private adventurers, or casual voyagers, who cared only

for present profit, and had no interest in the permanent prosperity of the trade, they were reckless in their dealings with the natives, and made no scruple of supplying them with fire-arms. In this way several fierce tribes in the vicinity of the Russian posts, or within the range of their trading excursions, were furnished with deadly means of warfare, and rendered troublesome and dangerous neighbours.

The Russian government had made representations to that of the United States of these mal-practices on the part of its citizens, and urged to have this traffic in arms prohibited; but, as it did not infringe any municipal law, our government could not interfere. Yet still it regarded, with solicitude, a traffic which, if persisted in, might give offence to Russia, at that time almost the only power friendly to us. In this dilemma the government had applied to Mr. Astor, as one conversant in this branch of trade, for information that might point out a way to remedy the evil. This circumstance had suggested to him the idea of supplying the Russian establishment regularly by means of

the annual ship that should visit the settlement at the mouth of the Columbia (or Oregon); by this means the casual trading vessels would be excluded from those parts of the coast where their mal-practices were so injurious to the Russians.

Such is a brief outline of the enterprise projected by Mr. Astor, but which continually expanded in his mind. Indeed it is due to him to say that he was not actuated by mere motives of individual profit. He was already wealthy beyond the ordinary desires of man, but he now aspired to that honourable fame which is awarded to men of similar scope of mind, who by their great commercial enterprises have enriched nations, peopled wildernesses, and extended the bounds of empire. He considered his projected establishment at the mouth of the Columbia as the emporium to an immense commerce; as a colony that would form the germ of a wide civilization; that would, in fact, carry the American population across the Rocky mountains and spread it along the shores of the

Pacific, as it already animated the shores of the Atlantic.

As Mr. Astor, by the magnitude of his commercial and financial relations, and the vigour and scope of his self-taught mind, had elevated himself into the consideration of government, and the communion and correspondence with leading statesmen, he, at an early period, communicated his schemes to President Jefferson, soliciting the countenance of government. How highly they were esteemed by that eminent man, we may judge by the following passage, written by him some time afterwards to Mr. Astor.

“I remember well having invited your proposition on this subject,* and encouraged it with the assurance of every facility and protection which the government could properly afford.

* On this point Mr. Jefferson's memory was in error. The proposition alluded to was the one, already mentioned, for the establishment of an American Fur Company in the Atlantic states. The great enterprise beyond the mountains, that was to sweep the shores of the Pacific, originated in the mind of Mr. Astor, and was proposed by him to the government.

I considered, as a great public acquisition, the commencement of a settlement on that point of the western coast of America, and looked forward with gratification to the time when its descendants should have spread themselves through the whole length of that coast, covering it with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us but by the ties of blood and interest, and enjoying like us the rights of self-government."

The cabinet joined with Mr. Jefferson in warm approbation of the plan, and held out assurance of every protection that could, consistently with general policy, be afforded.

Mr. Astor now prepared to carry his scheme into prompt execution. He had some competition, however, to apprehend and guard against. The North-west Company, acting feebly and partially upon the suggestions of its former agent, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, had pushed one or two advanced trading posts across the Rocky mountains, into a tract of country visited by that enterprising traveller, and since named New Caledonia. This tract lay about two de-

gress north of the Columbia, and intervened between the territories of the United States and those of Russia. Its length was about five hundred and fifty miles, and its breadth, from the mountains to the Pacific, from three hundred to three hundred and fifty geographical miles.

Should the North-west Company persist in extending their trade in that quarter, their competition might be of a serious detriment to the plans of Mr. Astor. It is true they would contend with him to a vast disadvantage, from the checks and restrictions to which they were subjected. They were straitened on one side by the rivalry of the Hudson's Bay Company; then they had no good post on the Pacific where they could receive supplies by sea for their establishments beyond the mountains; nor, if they had one, could they ship their furs thence to China, that great mart for peltries; the Chinese trade being comprised in the monopoly of the East India Company. Their posts beyond the mountains had to be supplied in yearly expeditions, like

caravans, from Montreal, and the furs conveyed back in the same way, by long, precarious, and expensive routes, across the continent. Mr. Astor, on the contrary, would be able to supply his proposed establishment at the mouth of the Columbia by sea, and to ship the furs collected there directly to China, so as to undersell the North-west Company in the great Chinese market.

Still, the competition of two rival companies west of the Rocky mountains could not but prove detrimental to both, and fraught with those evils, both to the trade and to the Indians, that had attended similar rivalries in the Canadas. To prevent any contest of the kind, therefore, he made known his plan to the agents of the North-west Company, and proposed to interest them to the extent of one third, in the trade thus to be opened. Some correspondence and negotiation ensued. The company were aware of the advantages which would be possessed by Mr. Astor, should he be able to carry his scheme into effect; but they anticipated a monopoly of the trade beyond the mountains

by their establishments in New Caledonia, and were loath to share it with an individual who had already proved a formidable competitor in the Atlantic trade. They hoped, too, by a timely move, to secure the mouth of the Columbia before Mr. Astor would be able to put his plans into operation; and, that key to the internal trade once in their possession, the whole country would be at their command. After some negotiation and delay, therefore, they declined the proposition that had been made to them, but subsequently dispatched a party for the mouth of the Columbia, to establish a post there before any expedition sent out by Mr. Astor might arrive.

In the mean time, Mr. Astor finding his overtures rejected, proceeded fearlessly to execute his enterprise in the face of the whole power of the North-west Company. His main establishment once planted at the mouth of the Columbia, he looked with confidence to ultimate success. Being able to reinforce and supply it amply by sea, he would push his interior posts in every direction up the rivers and along the

coast; supplying the natives at a lower rate, and thus gradually obliging the North-west Company to give up the competition, relinquish New Caledonia, and retire to the other side of the mountains. He would then have possession of the trade, not merely of the Columbia and its tributaries, but of the regions farther north, quite to the Russian possessions. Such was a part of his brilliant and comprehensive plan.

He now proceeded, with all diligence, to procure proper agents and coadjutors, habituated to the Indian trade and to the life of the wilderness. Among the clerks of the North-west Company were several of great capacity and experience, who had served out their probationary terms, but who, either through lack of interest and influence, or a want of vacancies, had not been promoted. They were consequently much dissatisfied, and ready for any employment in which their talents and acquirements might be turned to better account.

Mr. Astor made his overtures to several of these persons, and three of them entered into

his views. One of these, Mr. Alexander M'Kay, had accompanied Sir Alexander Mackenzie in both of his expeditions to the north-west coast of America in 1789 and 1793. The other two were Duncan M'Dougal and Donald M'Kenzie. To these was subsequently added Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, of New Jersey. As this gentleman was a native born citizen of the United States, and a person of great probity and worth, he was selected by Mr. Astor to be his chief agent, and to represent him in the contemplated establishment.

On the 23d of June, 1810, articles of agreement were entered into between Mr. Astor and those four gentlemen, acting for themselves and for the several persons who had already agreed to become, or should thereafter become, associated under the firm of "The Pacific Fur Company."

According to these articles, Mr. Astor was to be at the head of the company, and to manage its affairs in New York. He was to furnish vessels, goods, provisions, arms, ammunition, and all other requisites for the enterprise at first

cost and charges, provided that they did not, at any time, involve an advance of more than four hundred thousand dollars.

The stock of the company was to be divided into a hundred equal shares, with the profits accruing thereon. Fifty shares were to be at the disposition of Mr. Astor, and the other fifty to be divided among the partners and their associates.

Mr. Astor was to have the privilege of introducing other persons into the connexion, as partners; two of whom, at least, should be conversant with the Indian trade, and none of them entitled to more than three shares.

A general meeting of the company was to be held annually at Columbia river, for the investigation and regulation of its affairs; at which absent members might be represented, and might vote by proxy under certain specified conditions.

The association, if successful, was to continue for twenty years; but the parties had full power to abandon and dissolve it within the first five years, should it be found unprofitable. For this

term Mr. Astor covenanted to bear all the loss that might be incurred ; after which it was to be borne by all the partners, in proportion to their respective shares.

The parties of the second part were to execute faithfully such duties as might be assigned to them by a majority of the company on the north-west coast, and to repair to such place or places as the majority might direct.

An agent, appointed for the term of five years, was to reside at the principal establishment on the north-west coast, and Wilson Price Hunt was the one chosen for the first term. Should the interests of the concern at any time require his absence, a person was to be appointed, in general meeting, to take his place.

Such were the leading conditions of this association. We shall now proceed to relate the various hardy and eventful expeditions, by sea and land, to which it gave rise.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO EXPEDITIONS SET ON FOOT—THE TONQUIN AND HER CREW—CAPTAIN THORN, HIS CHARACTER—THE PARTNERS AND CLERKS—CANADIAN VOYAGEURS, THEIR HABITS, EMPLOYMENTS, DRESS, CHARACTER, SONGS—EXPEDITION OF A CANADIAN BOAT AND ITS CREW BY LAND AND WATER—ARRIVAL AT NEW YORK—PREPARATIONS FOR A SEA VOYAGE—NORTH-WEST BRAGGARTS—UNDERHAND PRECAUTIONS—LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS.

IN prosecuting his great scheme of commerce and colonization, two expeditions were devised by Mr. Astor, one by sea, the other by land. The former was to carry out the people, stores, ammunition, and merchandise, requisite for establishing a fortified trading post at the mouth of Columbia river. The latter, conducted by Mr. Hunt, was to proceed up the Missouri, and across the Rocky mountains, to the same point; exploring a line of commu-

nication across the continent, and noting the places where interior trading posts might be established. The expedition by sea is the one which comes first under consideration.

A fine ship was provided called the *Tonquin*, of two hundred and ninety tons burthen, mounting ten guns, with a crew of twenty men. She carried an assortment of merchandise for trading with the natives of the sea board and of the interior, together with the frame of a schooner, to be employed in the coasting trade. Seeds also were provided for the cultivation of the soil, and nothing was neglected for the necessary supply of the establishment. The command of the ship was intrusted to Jonathan Thorn, of New York, a lieutenant in the United States navy, on leave of absence. He was a man of courage and firmness, who had distinguished himself in our Tripolitan war, and, from being accustomed to naval discipline, was considered by Mr. Astor as well fitted to take charge of an expedition of the kind. Four of the partners were to embark in the ship, namely, Messrs. M'Kay, M'Dougal, David Stuart, and

his nephew, Robert Stuart. Mr. M'Dougal was empowered by Mr. Astor to act as his proxy in the absence of Mr. Hunt, to vote for him and in his name, on any question that might come before any meeting of the persons interested in the voyage.

Besides the partners, there were twelve clerks to go out in the ship, several of them natives of Canada, who had some experience in Indian trade. They were bound to the service of the company for five years, at the rate of one hundred dollars a year, payable at the expiration of the term, and an annual equipment of clothing to the amount of forty dollars. In case of ill conduct they were liable to forfeit their wages and be dismissed; but, should they acquit themselves well, the confident expectation was held out to them of promotion and partnership. Their interests were thus, to some extent, identified with those of the company.

Several artisans were likewise to sail in the ship, for the supply of the colony; but the most peculiar and characteristic part of this motley embarkation consisted of thirteen Cana-

dian "voyageurs," who had enlisted for five years. As this class of functionaries will continually recur in the course of the following narrations, and as they form one of those distinct and strongly marked castes or orders of people, springing up in this vast continent out of geographical circumstances, or the varied pursuits, habitudes, and origins of its population, we shall sketch a few of their characteristics for the information of the reader.

The "voyageurs" form a kind of confraternity in the Canadas, like the arrieros, or carriers of Spain, and, like them, are employed in long internal expeditions of travel and traffic: with this difference, that the arrieros travel by land, the voyageurs by water; the former with mules and horses, the latter with batteaux and canoes. The voyageurs may be said to have sprung up out of the fur trade, having originally been employed by the early French merchants in their trading expeditions through the labyrinth of rivers and lakes of the boundless interior. They were coeval with the *coureurs des bois*, or rangers of the woods, already noticed, and, like

them, in the intervals of their long, arduous, and laborious expeditions, were prone to pass their time in idleness and revelry about the trading posts or settlements ; squandering their hard earnings in heedless conviviality, and rivalling their neighbours, the Indians, in indolent indulgence, and an imprudent disregard of the morrow.

When Canada passed under British domination, and the old French trading houses were broken up, the voyageurs, like the *coureurs des bois*, were for a time disheartened and disconsolate, and with difficulty could reconcile themselves to the service of the new comers, so different in habits, manners, and language, from their former employers. By degrees, however, they became accustomed to the change, and at length came to consider the British fur traders, and especially the members of the North-west Company, as the legitimate lords of creation.

The dress of these people is generally half civilized, half savage. They wear a capot or surcoat, made of a blanket, a striped cotton

shirt, cloth trousers, or leathern legging, moccasins of deer skin, and a belt of variegated worsted, from which are suspended the knife, tobacco pouch, and other implements. Their language is of the same piebald character, being a French patois, embroidered with Indian and English words and phrases.

The lives of the voyageurs are passed in wild and extensive roving, in the service of individuals, but more especially of the fur traders. They are generally of French descent, and inherit much of the gaiety and lightness of heart of their ancestors, being full of anecdote and song, and ever ready for the dance. They inherit, too, a fund of civility and complaisance; and, instead of that hardness and grossness which men in laborious life are apt to indulge towards each other, they are mutually obliging and accommodating; interchanging kind offices, yielding each other assistance and comfort in every emergency, and using the familiar appellations of "cousin" and "brother," when there is in fact no relationship. Their natural

good will is probably heightened by a community of adventure and hardship in their precarious and wandering life.

No men are more submissive to their leaders and employers, more capable of enduring hardship, or more good-humoured under privations. Never are they so happy as when on long and rough expeditions, toiling up rivers or coasting lakes; encamping at night on the borders, gossiping round their fires, and bivouacking in the open air. They are dexterous boatmen, vigorous and adroit with the oar and paddle, and will row from morning unto night without a murmur. The steersman often sings an old traditional French song, with some regular burden in which they all join, keeping time with their oars; if at any time they flag in spirits or relax in exertion, it is but necessary to strike up a song of the kind to put them all in fresh spirits and activity. The Canadian waters are vocal with these little French chansons, that have been echoed from mouth to mouth and transmitted from father to son, from the earliest days of the colony; and it has a pleasing effect,

in a still golden summer evening, to see a batteau gliding across the bosom of a lake and dipping its oars to the cadence of these quaint old ditties, or sweeping along, in full chorus, on a bright sunny morning, down the transparent current of one of the Canadian rivers.

But we are talking of things that are fast fading away! The march of mechanical invention is driving every thing poetical before it. The steamboats, which are fast dispelling the wildness and romance of our lakes and rivers, and aiding to subdue the world into commonplace, are proving as fatal to the race of the Canadian voyageurs, as they have been to that of the boatmen on the Mississippi. Their glory is departed. They are no longer the lords of our internal seas, and the great navigators of the wilderness. Some of them may still occasionally be seen coasting the lower lakes with their frail barks, and pitching their camps and lighting their fires upon the shores; but their range is fast contracting to those remote waters and shallow and obstructed rivers unvisited by the steam-boat. In the course of years they

will gradually disappear; their songs will die away like the echoes they once awakened, and the Canadian voyageurs will become a forgotten race, or remembered, like their associates, the Indians, among the poetical images of past times, and as themes for local and romantic associations.

An instance of the buoyant temperament and the professional pride of these people was furnished in the gay and braggart style in which they arrived at New York to join the enterprise. They were determined to regale and astonish the people of the "States" with the sight of a Canadian boat and a Canadian crew. They accordingly fitted up a large but light bark canoe, such as is used in the fur trade; transported it in a waggon from the banks of the St. Lawrence to the shores of lake Champlain; traversed the lake in it, from end to end; hoisted it again in a waggon and wheeled it off to Lansingburgh, and there launched it upon the waters of the Hudson. Down this river they plied their course merrily on a fine summer's day, making its banks resound for the first time

with their old French boat songs; passing by the villages with whoop and halloo, so as to make the honest Dutch farmers mistake them for a crew of savages. In this way they swept, in full song, and with regular flourish of the paddle, round New York, in a still summer evening, to the wonder and admiration of its inhabitants, who had never before witnessed on their waters, a nautical apparition of the kind.

Such was the variegated band of adventurers about to embark in the Tonquin on this arduous and doubtful enterprise. While yet in port and on dry land, in the bustle of preparation and the excitement of novelty, all was sunshine and promise. The Canadians especially, who with their constitutional vivacity, have a considerable dash of the gascon, were buoyant and boastful, and great braggarts as to the future; while all those who had been in the service of the Northwest Company, and engaged in the Indian trade, plumed themselves upon their hardihood and their capacity to endure privations. If Mr. Astor ventured to hint at the difficulties they might have to encounter, they treated them

with scorn. They were "north-westers;" men seasoned to hardships, who cared for neither wind nor weather. They could live hard, lie hard, sleep hard, eat dogs!—in a word they were ready to do and suffer any thing for the good of the enterprise. With all this profession of zeal and devotion, Mr. Astor was not over-confident of the stability and firm faith of these mercurial beings. He had received information, also, that an armed brig from Halifax, probably at the instigation of the Northwest Company, was hovering on the coast, watching for the Tonquin, with the purpose of impressing the Canadians on board of her, as British subjects, and thus interrupting the voyage. It was a time of doubt and anxiety, when the relations between the United States and Great Britain were daily assuming a more precarious aspect, and verging towards that war which shortly ensued. As a precautionary measure, therefore, he required the voyageurs, as they were about to enter into the service of an American association, and to reside within

the limits of the United States, should take the oaths of naturalization, as American citizens. To this they readily agreed, and shortly afterwards assured him that they had actually done so. It was not until after they had sailed that he discovered that they had entirely deceived him in the matter.

The confidence of Mr. Astor was abused in another quarter. Two of the partners, both of them Scotchmen, and recently in the service of the North-west Company, had misgivings as to an enterprise which might clash with the interests and establishments protected by the British flag. They privately waited upon the British minister, Mr. Jackson, then in New York, laid open to him the whole scheme of Mr. Astor, though intrusted to them in confidence, and dependent, in a great measure, upon secrecy at the outset for its success, and inquired whether they, as British subjects, could lawfully engage in it. The reply satisfied their scruples, while the information they imparted excited the surprise and admiration of Mr.

Jackson, that a private individual should have conceived and set on foot at his own risk and expense, so great an enterprise.

This step on the part of those gentlemen was not known to Mr. Astor until sometime afterwards, or it might have modified the trust and confidence reposed in them.

To guard against any interruption to the voyage by the armed brig, said to be off the harbour, Mr. Astor applied to Commodore Rodgers, at that time commanding at New York, to give the Tonquin safe convoy off the coast. The commodore having received from a high official source assurance of the deep interest which the government took in the enterprise, sent directions to Captain Hull, at that time cruising off the harbour, in the frigate Constitution, to afford the Tonquin the required protection when she should put to sea.

Before the day of embarkation, Mr. Astor addressed a letter of instruction to the four partners who were to sail in the ship. In this he enjoined them, in the most earnest manner, to cultivate harmony and unanimity, and recom-

mended that all differences of opinions on points connected with the objects and interests of the voyage, should be discussed by the whole, and decided by a majority of votes. He, moreover, gave them especial caution as to their conduct on arriving at their destined port; exhorting them to be careful to make a favourable impression upon the wild people, among whom their lot and the fortunes of the enterprise would be cast. "If you find them kind," said he, "as I hope you will, be so to them. If otherwise, act with caution and forbearance, and convince them that you come as friends."

With the same anxious forethought he wrote a letter of instructions to Captain Thorn, in which he urged the strictest attention to the health of himself and his crew, and to the promotion of good-humour and harmony on board his ship. "To prevent any misunderstanding," added he, "will require your particular good management." His letter closed with an injunction of wariness in his intercourse with the natives, a subject on which Mr. Astor was justly sensible he could not be too earnest. "I

must recommend you," said he, "to be particularly careful on the coast, and not rely too much on the friendly disposition of the natives. All accidents which have as yet happened there arose from too much confidence in the Indians."

The reader will bear these instructions in mind, as events will prove their wisdom and importance, and the disasters which ensued in consequence of the neglect of them.

CHAPTER V.

SAILING OF THE TONQUIN—A RIGID COMMANDER AND A RECK-
LESS CREW—LANDSMEN ON SHIPBOARD—FRESH WATER SAILORS
AT SEA—LUBBER—NESTS—SHIP FARE—A LABRADOR VETERAN
LITERARY CLERKS—CURIOUS TRAVELLERS—ROBINSON CRUSOE'S
ISLAND—QUARTERDECK QUARRELS—FALKLAND ISLANDS—A
WILDGOOSECHASE—PORT EGMONT—EPITAPH HUNTING—"OLD
MORTALITY"—PENGUIN SHOOTING—SPORTSMEN LEFT IN THE
LURCH—A HARD PULL—FURTHER ALTERCATIONS—ARRIVAL
AT OWYHEE.

ON the 8th of September, 1810, the Tonquin put to sea, where she was soon joined by the frigate Constitution. The wind was fresh and fair from the south-west, and the ship was soon out of sight of land and free from the apprehended danger of interruption. The frigate, therefore, gave her "God speed," and left her to her course.

The harmony so earnestly enjoined by Mr. Astor on this heterogeneous crew, and which had been so confidently promised in the buoyant moments of preparation, was doomed to meet with a check at the very outset.

Captain Thorn was an honest, straightforward, but somewhat dry and dictatorial commander, who, having been nurtured in the system and discipline of a ship of war, and in a sacred opinion of the supremacy of the quarterdeck, was disposed to be absolute lord and master on board of his ship. He appears, moreover, to have had no great opinion, from the first, of the persons embarked with him. He had stood by with surly contempt while they vaunted so bravely to Mr. Astor of all they could do and all they could undergo; how they could face all weathers, put up with all kinds of fare, and even eat dogs with a relish, when no better food was to be had. He had set them down as a set of land lubbers and braggadocios, and was disposed to treat them accordingly. Mr. Astor was, in his eyes, his only real employer, being the father of the enterprise, who furnished all

funds and bore all losses. The others were mere agents and subordinates, who lived at his expense. He evidently had but a narrow idea of the scope and nature of the enterprise, limiting his views merely to his part of it; every thing beyond the concerns of his ship was out of his sphere; and any thing that interfered with the routine of his nautical duties put him in a passion.

The partners, on the other hand, had been brought up in the service of the North-west Company, and in a profound idea of the importance, dignity, and authority of a partner. They already began to consider themselves on a par with the M'Tavishes, the M'Gillivrays, the Frobishers, and the other magnates of the north-west, whom they had been accustomed to look up to as the great ones of the earth; and they were a little disposed, perhaps, to wear their suddenly-acquired honours with some air of pretension. Mr. Astor, too, had put them on their mettle with respect to the captain, describing him as a gunpowder fellow who would command his ship in fine style, and, if there

was any fighting to do, would "blow all out of the water."

Thus prepared to regard each other with no very cordial eye, it is not to be wondered at that the parties soon came into collision. On the very first night Captain Thorn began his man-of-war discipline by ordering the lights in the cabin to be extinguished at eight o'clock.

The pride of the partners was immediately in arms. This was an invasion of their rights and dignities not to be borne. They were on board of their own ship, and entitled to consult their ease and enjoyment. M'Dougal was the champion of their cause. He was an active, irritable, fuming, vainglorious little man, and elevated in his own opinion, by being the proxy of Mr. Astor. A violent altercation ensued, in the course of which Thorn threatened to put the partners in irons should they prove refractory; upon which M'Dougal seized a pistol and swore to be the death of the captain should he ever offer such an indignity. It was some time before the irritated parties could be pacified by the more temperate bystanders.

Such was the captain's outset with the partners. Nor did the clerks stand much higher in his good graces ; indeed, he seemed to have regarded all the landsmen on board his ship as a kind of live lumber, continually in the way. The poor voyageurs, too, continually irritated his spleen by their "lubberly" and unseemly habits, so abhorrent to one accustomed to the cleanliness of a man of war. These poor fresh water sailors, so vainglorious on shore, and almost amphibious when on lakes and rivers, lost all heart and stomach the moment they were at sea. For days they suffered the doleful rigours and retchings of seasickness, lurking below in their berths in squalid state, or emerging now and then like spectres from the hatchways, in capotes and blankets, with dirty nightcaps, grizzly beard, lantern visage and unhappy eye, shivering about the deck, and ever and anon crawling to the sides of the vessel, and offering up their tributes to the windward, to the infinite annoyance of the captain.

His letters to Mr. Astor, wherein he pours forth the bitterness of his soul, and his seaman-

like impatience of what he considers the "*lubberly*" character and conduct of those around him, are before us, and are amusingly characteristic. The honest captain is full of vexation on his own account, and solicitude on account of Mr. Astor, whose property he considers at the mercy of a most heterogeneous and wasteful crew.

As to the clerks, he pronounces them mere pretenders, not one of whom had ever been among Indians, nor farther to the north-west than Montreal, nor of higher rank than bar-keeper of a tavern or marker of a billiard table, excepting one, who had been a schoolmaster, and whom he emphatically sets down for "as foolish a pedant as ever lived."

Then as to the artisans and labourers who had been brought from Canada and shipped at such expense, the three most respectable, according to the captain's account, were culprits, who had fled from Canada on account of their misdeeds; the rest had figured in Montreal as draymen, barbers, waiters, and carriage drivers,

and were the most helpless, worthless beings, "that ever broke sea biscuit."

It may easily be imagined what a series of misunderstandings and cross purposes would be likely to take place between such a crew and such a commander. The captain, in his zeal for the health and cleanliness of his ship, would make sweeping visitations to the "lubber nests" of the unlucky "voyageurs" and their companions in misery, ferret them out of their berths, make them air and wash themselves and their accoutrements, and oblige them to stir about briskly and take exercise.

Nor did his disgust and vexation cease when all hands had recovered from seasickness, and become accustomed to the ship, for now broke forth an alarming keenness of appetite that threatened havoc to the provisions. What especially irritated the captain was the daintiness of some of his cabin passengers. They were loud in their complaints of the ship's fare, though their table was served with fresh pork, hams, tongues, smoked beef, and puddings.

“When thwarted in their cravings for delicacies,” said he, “they would exclaim that it was d—d hard they could not live as they pleased upon their own property, being on board their own ship, freighted with their own merchandise. And these,” added he, “are the fine fellows who made such boast that they could ‘eat dogs.’”

In his indignation at what he termed their effeminacy, he would swear that he would never take them to sea again “without having Fly-market on the forecastle, Covent-garden on the poop, and a cool spring from Canada in the maintop.”

As they proceeded on their voyage and got into the smooth seas and pleasant weather of the tropics, other annoyances occurred to vex the spirit of the captain. He had been crossed by the irritable mood of one of the partners; he was now excessively annoyed by the good-humour of another. This was the elder Stuart, who was an easy soul, and of a social disposition. He had seen life in Canada, and on the coast of Labrador; had been a fur trader in the

former, and a fisherman on the latter; and, in the course of his experience, had made various expeditions with voyageurs. He was accustomed, therefore, to the familiarity which prevails between that class and their superiors, and the gossipings which take place among them when seated round a fire at their encampments. Stuart was never so happy as when he could seat himself on the deck with a number of these men round him, in camping style, smoke together, passing the pipe from mouth to mouth, after the manner of the Indians, sing old Canadian boat songs, and tell stories about their hardships and adventures, in the course of which he rivalled Sinbad in his long tales of the sea, about his fishing exploits on the coast of Labrador.

This gossiping familiarity shocked the captain's notions of rank and subordination, and nothing was so abhorrent to him as the community of pipe between master and man, and their mingling in chorus in the outlandish boat songs.

Then there was another whimsical source of annoyance to him. Some of the young clerks,

who were making their first voyage, and to whom every thing was new and strange, were, very rationally, in the habit of taking notes and keeping journals. This was a sore abomination to the honest captain, who held their literary pretensions in great contempt. "The collecting of materials for long histories of their voyage and travels," said he, in his letter to Mr. Astor, "appears to engross most of their attention." We can conceive what must have been the crusty impatience of the worthy navigator, when, on any trifling occurrence in the course of the voyage, quite commonplace in his eyes, he saw these young landsmen running to record it in their journals; and what indignant glances he must have cast to right and left, as he worried about the deck, giving out his orders for the management of the ship, surrounded by singing, smoking, gossiping, scribbling groups, all, as he thought, intent upon the amusement of the passing hour, instead of the great purpose and interests of the voyage.

It is possible the captain was in some degree right in his notions. Though some of the pas-

sengers had much to gain by the voyage, none of them had any thing positively to lose. They were mostly young men, in the heyday of life; and having got into fine latitudes, upon smooth seas, with a well stored ship under them, and a fair wind in the shoulder of the sail, they seemed to have got into a holiday world, and were disposed to enjoy it. That craving desire, natural to untravelled men of fresh and lively minds, to see strange lands, and to visit scenes famous in history or fable, was expressed by some of the partners and clerks, with respect to some of the storied coasts and islands that lay within their route. The captain, however, who regarded every coast and island with a matter of fact eye, and had no more associations connected with them than those laid down in his seachart, considered all this curiosity as exceedingly idle and childish. "In the first part of the voyage," says he in his letter, "they were determined to have it said they had been in Africa, and therefore insisted on my stopping at the Cape de Verds. Next they said the ship should stop on the coast of Patagonia, for they must see the large and uncommon inhabitants

of that place. Then they must go to the island where Robinson Crusoe had so long lived. And lastly, they were determined to see the handsome inhabitants of Easter island."

To all these resolves the captain opposed his peremptory veto, as "contrary to instructions." Then would break forth an unavailing explosion of wrath on the part of certain of the partners, in the course of which they did not even spare Mr. Astor for his act of supererogation in furnishing orders for the control of the ship while they were on board, instead of leaving them to be the judges, where it would be best for her to touch, and how long to remain. The choleric M'Dougal took the lead in these railings, being, as has been observed, a little puffed up with the idea of being Mr. Astor's proxy.

The captain, however, became only so much the more crusty and dogged in his adherence to his orders, and touchy and harsh in his dealings with his passengers, and frequent altercations ensued. He may in some measure have been influenced by his seamanlike impatience of the interference of landsmen, and his high

notions of naval etiquette and quarterdeck authority; but he evidently had an honest, trusty concern for the interests of his employer. He pictured to himself the anxious projector of the enterprise, who had disbursed so munificently in its outfit, calculating on the zeal, fidelity, and singleness of purpose of his associates and agents; while they, on the other hand, having a good ship at their disposal, and a deep pocket at home to bear them out, seemed ready to loiter on every coast, and amuse themselves in every port.

On the 4th of December they came in sight of the Falkland islands. Having been for some time on an allowance of water, it was resolved to anchor here and obtain a supply. A boat was sent into a small bay to take soundings. Mr. M'Dougal and Mr. M'Kay took this occasion to go on shore, but with a request from the captain that they would not detain the ship. Once on shore, however, they were in no haste to obey his orders, but rambled about in search of curiosities. The anchorage proving unsafe, and water difficult to be procured, the captain

stood out to sea, and made repeated signals for those on shore to rejoin the ship, but it was not until nine at night that they came on board.

The wind being adverse, the boat was again sent on shore on the following morning, and the same gentlemen again landed, but promised to come off at a moment's warning; they again forgot their promise in their eager pursuit of wild geese and sea wolves. After a time the wind hauled fair, and signals were made for the boat. Half an hour elapsed but no boat put off. The captain reconnoitred the shore with his glass, and, to his infinite vexation, saw the loiterers in the full enjoyment of their "wildgoosechase." Nettled to the quick, he immediately made sail. When those on shore saw the ship actually under way, they embarked with all speed, but had a hard pull of eight miles before they got on board, and then experienced but a grim reception, notwithstanding that they came well laden with the spoils of the chase.

Two days afterwards, on the 7th of December, they anchored at Port Egmont in the same

island, where they remained four days taking in water and making repairs. This was a joyous time for the landsmen. They pitched a tent on shore, had a boat at their command, and passed their time merrily in rambling about the island, and coasting along the shores, shooting sea lions, seals, foxes, geese, ducks, and penguins. None were keener in pursuit of this kind of game than M'Dougal and David Stuart; the latter was reminded of aquatic sports on the coast of Labrador, and his hunting exploits in the north-west.

In the mean time the captain addressed himself steadily to the business of his ship, scorning the holiday spirit and useless pursuits of his emancipated messmates, and warning them, from time to time, not to wander away nor be out of hail. They promised, as usual, that the ship should never experience a moment's detention on their account, but, as usual, forgot their promise.

On the morning of the 11th, the repairs being all finished, and the water casks replenished, the signal was given to embark, and the ship

began to weigh anchor. At this time several of the passengers were dispersed about the island, amusing themselves in various ways. Some of the young men had found two inscriptions, in English, over a place where two unfortunate mariners had been buried in this desert island. As the inscriptions were nearly worn out by time and weather, they were playing the part of "Old Mortality," and piously renewing them. The signal from the ship summoned them from their labours; they saw the sails unfurled, and that it was getting under way. The two sporting partners, however, Mr. M'Dougal and David Stuart, had strolled away to the south of the island in pursuit of penguins. It would never do to put off without them, as there was but one boat to convey the whole.

While this delay took place on shore, the captain was storming on board. This was the third time his orders had been treated with contempt, and the ship wantonly detained, and it should be the last; so he spread all sail and put to sea, swearing he would leave the laggards to shift for themselves. It was in vain that

those on board made remonstrances and entreaties, and represented the horrors of abandoning men upon a steril and uninhabited island: the sturdy captain was inflexible.

In the mean time, the penguin hunters had joined the engravers of tombstones, but not before the ship was already out at sea. They all, to the number of eight, threw themselves into their boat, which was about twelve feet in length, and rowed with might and main. For three hours and a half did they tug anxiously and severely at the oar, swashed occasionally by the surging waves of the open sea, while the ship inexorably kept on her course, and seemed determined to leave them behind.

On board of the ship was the nephew of David Stuart, a young man of spirit and resolution. Seeing, as he thought, the captain obstinately bent upon abandoning his uncle and the others, he seized a pistol, and in a paroxysm of wrath swore he would blow out the captain's brains, unless he put about or shortened sail.

Fortunately for all parties, the wind just then came ahead, and the boat was enabled to reach

the ship; otherwise, disastrous circumstances might have ensued. We can hardly believe that the captain really intended to carry his threat into full effect, and rather think he meant to let the laggards off for a long pull and a hearty fright. He declared, however, in his letter to Mr. Astor, that he was serious in his threats; and there is no knowing how far such an iron man may push his notions of authority.

“Had the wind,” writes he, “(unfortunately) not hauled ahead soon after leaving the harbour’s mouth, I should positively have left them; and, indeed, I cannot but think it an unfortunate circumstance for you that it so happened, for the first loss in this instance would, in my opinion, have proved the best, as they seem to have no idea of the value of property, nor any apparent regard for your interest, although interwoven with their own.”

This, it must be confessed, was acting with a high hand, and carrying a regard to the owner’s property to a dangerous length. Various petty feuds occurred also between him and the partners, in respect to the goods on board the ship,

some articles of which they wished to distribute for clothing among the men, or for other purposes which they deemed essential. The captain, however, kept a mastiff watch upon the cargo, and growled and snapped if they but offered to touch box or bale. "It was contrary to orders; it would forfeit his insurance; it was out of all rule." It was in vain they insisted upon their right to do so, as part owners, and as acting for the good of the enterprise; the captain only stuck to his point the more stanchly. They consoled themselves, therefore, by declaring, that as soon as they made land they would assert their rights, and do with ship and cargo as they pleased.

Beside these feuds between the captain and the partners, there were feuds between the partners themselves, occasioned, in some measure, by jealousy of rank. M'Dougal and M'Kay began to draw plans for the fort, and other buildings of the intended establishment. They agreed very well as to the outline and dimensions, which were on a sufficiently grand scale; but when they came to arrange the details, fierce disputes

arose, and they would quarrel by the hour about the distribution of the doors and windows. Many were the hard words and hard names bandied between them on these occasions, according to the captain's account. Each accused the other of endeavouring to assume unwarrantable power, and to take the lead; upon which Mr. McDougal would vauntingly lay down Mr. Astor's letter, constituting him his representative and proxy, a document not to be disputed.

These wordy contests, though violent, were brief; "and within fifteen minutes," says the captain, "they would be caressing each other like children."

While all this petty anarchy was agitating the little world within the Tonquin, the good ship prosperously pursued her course, doubled Cape Horn on the 25th of December, careered across the bosom of the Pacific, until, on the 11th of February, the snowy peaks of Owyhee were seen brightening above the horizon.

CHAPTER VI.

OWYHEE—SANDWICH ISLANDERS—THEIR NAUTICAL TALENTS—
TAMAAHMAAH—HIS NAVY—HIS NEGOTIATIONS—VIEWS OF MR.
ASTOR WITH RESPECT TO THE SANDWICH ISLANDS—KARAKAKORA
ROYAL MONOPOLY OF PORK—DESCRIPTION OF THE ISLANDERS—
GAYETIES ON SHORE—CHRONICLER OF THE ISLAND—PLACE
WHERE CAPTAIN COOK WAS KILLED—JOHN YOUNG, A NAUTICAL
GOVERNOR—HIS STORY—WAITITI—A ROYAL RESIDENCE—A
ROYAL VISIT—GRAND CEREMONIALS—CLOSE DEALING—A
ROYAL PORK MERCHANT—GRIEVANCES OF A MATTER-OF-FACT
MAN.

OWYHEE, or Hawaii, as it is written by more exact orthographers, is the largest of the cluster, ten in number, of the Sandwich islands. It is about ninety-seven miles in length, and seventy-eight in breadth, rising gradually into three pyramidal summits or cones; the highest, Mouna Roa, being eighteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, so as to domineer

over the whole Archipelago, and to be a landmark over a wide extent of ocean. It remains a lasting monument of the enterprising and unfortunate Captain Cook, who was murdered by the natives of this island.

The Sandwichislanders, when first discovered, evinced a character superior to most of the savages of the Pacific isles. They were frank and open in their deportment, friendly and liberal in their dealings, with an apt ingenuity apparent in all their rude inventions.

The tragical fate of the discoverer, which, for a time, brought them under the charge of ferocity, was, in fact, the result of sudden exasperation, caused by the seizure of their chief.

At the time of the visit of the *Tonquin*, the islanders had profited, in many respects, by occasional intercourse with white men; and had shown a quickness to observe and cultivate those arts important to their mode of living. Originally they had no means of navigating the seas by which they were surrounded, superior to light pirogues, which were little competent to contend with the storms of the broad ocean.

As the islands are not in sight of each other, there could, therefore, be but casual intercourse between them. The traffic with white men had put them in possession of vessels of superior description; they had made themselves acquainted with their management, and had even made rude advances in the art of ship building.

• These improvements had been promoted, in a great measure, by the energy and sagacity of one man, the famous Tamaahmaah. He had originally been a petty eri, or chief; but, being of an intrepid and aspiring nature, he had risen in rank, and, availing himself of the superior advantages now afforded in navigation, had brought the whole Archipelago in subjection to his arms. At the time of the arrival of the Tonquin he had about forty schooners, of from twenty to thirty tons burthen, and one old American ship. With these he maintained undisputed sway over his insular domains, and carried on an intercourse with the chiefs or governors whom he had placed in command of the several islands.

The situation of this group of islands, far in

the bosom of the vast Pacific, and their abundant fertility, rendered them important stopping places on the highway to China, or to the north-west coast of America. Here the vessels engaged in the fur trade touched to make repairs and procure provisions; and here they often sheltered themselves during the winters that occurred in their long coasting expeditions.

The British navigators were, from the first, aware of the value of these islands to the purposes of commerce; and Tamaahmaah, not long after he had attained the sovereign sway, was persuaded by Vancouver, the celebrated discoverer, to acknowledge, on behalf of himself and subjects, allegiance to the king of Great Britain. The reader cannot but call to mind the visit which the royal family and court of the Sandwich islands was, in late years, induced to make to the court of St. James's; and the serio-comic ceremonials and mock parade which attended that singular travesty of monarchical style.

It was a part of the wide and comprehensive plan of Mr. Astor to establish a friendly intercourse between these islands and his intended

colony, which might, for a time, have occasion to draw supplies thence; and he even had a vague idea of, some time or other, getting possession of one of their islands as a rendezvous for his ships, and a link in the chain of his commercial establishments.

On the evening of the 12th of February the Tonquin anchored in the bay of Karakakooa, in the island of Owyhee. The surrounding shores were wild and broken, with overhanging cliffs and precipices of black volcanic rock. Beyond these, however, the country was fertile and well cultivated, with enclosures of yams, plantains, sweet potatoes, sugar-canes, and other productions of warm climates and teeming soils; and the numerous habitations of the natives were pleasantly sheltered beneath clumps of coconut and bread-fruit trees, which afforded both food and shade. This mingled variety of garden and grove swept gradually up the sides of the mountains, until succeeded by dense forests, which in turn gave place to naked and craggy rocks, until the summits rose into the regions of perpetual snow.

The royal residence of Tamaahmaah was at this time at another island named Woahoo. The island of Owyhee was under the command of one of his eris, or chiefs, who resided at the village of Tocaigh, situated on a different part of the coast from the bay of Karakakooa.

On the morning after her arrival, the ship was surrounded by canoes and pirogues, filled with the islanders of both sexes, bringing off supplies of fruits and vegetables, bananas, plantains, watermelons, yams, cabbages, and taro. The captain was desirous, however, of purchasing a number of hogs, but there were none to be had. The trade in pork was a royal monopoly, and no subject of the great Tamaahmaah dared to meddle with it. Such provisions as they could furnish, however, were brought by the natives in abundance, and a lively intercourse was kept up during the day, in which the women mingled in the kindest manner.

The islanders are a comely race, of a copper complexion. The men are tall and well made, with forms indicating strength and activity; the women with regular and occasionally handsome

features, and a lascivious expression, characteristic of their temperament. Their style of dress was nearly the same as in the days of Captain Cook. The men wore the maro, a band one foot in width and several feet in length, swathed round the loins, and formed of tappa, or cloth of bark; the kihei, or mantle, about six feet square, tied in a knot over one shoulder, passed under the opposite arm, so as to leave it bare, and falling in graceful folds before and behind, to the knee, so as to bear some resemblance to a Roman toga.

The female dress consisted of the pau, a garment formed of a piece of tappa, several yards in length, and one in width wrapped round the waist, and reaching like a petticoat, to the knees. Over this a kihei or mantle, larger than that of the men, sometimes worn over both shoulders, like a shawl, sometimes over one only. These mantles were seldom worn by either sex during the heat of the day, when the exposure of their persons was at first very revolting to a civilized eye.

Towards evening several of the partners and

clerks went on shore, where they were well received and hospitably entertained. A dance was performed for their amusement, in which nineteen young women and one man figured very gracefully, singing in concert, and moving to the cadence of their song.

All this, however, was nothing to the purpose in the eyes of Captain Thorn, who being disappointed in his hope of obtaining a supply of pork, or finding good water, was anxious to be off. This it was not so easy to effect. The passengers, once on shore, were disposed, as usual, to profit by the occasion. The partners had many inquiries to make relative to the island, with a view to business; while the young clerks were delighted with the charms and graces of the dancing damsels.

To add to their gratifications, an old man offered to conduct them to the spot where Captain Cook was massacred. The proposition was eagerly accepted, and all hands set out on a pilgrimage to the place. The veteran islander performed his promise faithfully, and pointed out the very spot where the unfortunate dis-

coverer fell. The rocks and cocoa-trees around bore record of the fact, in the marks of the balls fired from the boats upon the savages. The pilgrims gathered round the old man, and drew from him all the particulars he had to relate respecting this memorable event; while the honest captain stood by and bit his nails with impatience. To add to his vexation, they employed themselves in knocking off pieces of the rocks, and cutting off the bark of the trees marked by the balls, which they conveyed back to the ship as precious relics.

Right glad, therefore, was he to get them and their treasures fairly on board, when he made sail from this unprofitable place, and steered for the bay of Tocaigh, the residence of the chief or governor of the island, where he hoped to be more successful in obtaining supplies. On coming to anchor the captain went on shore, accompanied by Mr. M'Dougal and Mr. M'Kay, and paid a visit to the governor. This dignitary proved to be an old sailor, by the name of John Young; who, after being tossed about the seas

like another Sinbad, had, by one of the whimsical freaks of fortune, been elevated to the government of a savage island. He received his visitors with more hearty familiarity than personages in his high station are apt to indulge, but soon gave them to understand that provisions were scanty at Tocaigh, and that there was no good water, no rain having fallen in the neighbourhood in three years.

The captain was immediately for breaking up the conference and departing, but the partners were not so willing to part with the nautical governor, who seemed disposed to be extremely communicative, and from whom they might be able to procure some useful information. A long conversation accordingly ensued, in the course of which they made many inquiries about the affairs of the islands, their natural productions, and the possibility of turning them to advantage in the way of trade; nor did they fail to inquire into the individual history of John Young, and how he came to be governor. This he gave with great condescension, running through the

whole course of his fortunes "even from his boyish days."

He was a native of Liverpool, in England, and had followed the sea from his boyhood, until, by dint of good conduct, he had risen so far in his profession as to be boatswain of an American ship called the *Eleanor*, commanded by Captain Metcalf. In this vessel he had sailed in 1789, on one of those casual expeditions to the north-west coast, in quest of furs. In the course of the voyage, the captain left a small schooner named the *Fair American*, at Nootka, with a crew of five men, commanded by his son, a youth of eighteen. She was to follow on in the track of the *Eleanor*.

In February, 1790, Captain Metcalf touched at the island of Mowee, one of the Sandwich group. While anchored here, a boat which was astern of the *Eleanor* was stolen, and a seaman who was in it was killed. The natives, generally, disclaimed the outrage, and brought the shattered remains of the boat and the dead

body of the seaman to the ship. Supposing that they had thus appeased the anger of the captain, they thronged, as usual, in great numbers about the vessel to trade. Captain Metcalf, however, determined on a bloody revenge. The *Eleanor* mounted ten guns; all these he ordered to be loaded with musket-balls, nails, and pieces of old iron, and then fired them, and the small arms of the ship, among the natives. The havoc was dreadful; more than a hundred, according to Young's account, were slain.

After this signal act of vengeance Captain Metcalf sailed from Mowee, and made for the island of Owyhee, where he was well received by Tamaahmaah. The fortunes of this warlike chief were at that time on the rise. He had originally been of inferior rank, ruling over only one or two districts in Owyhee, but had gradually made himself sovereign of his native island.

The *Eleanor* remained some few days at anchor here, and an apparently friendly intercourse was kept up with the inhabitants. On the 17th

of March, John Young obtained permission to pass the night on shore. On the following morning a signal gun summoned him to return on board.

He went to the shore to embark, but found all the canoes hauled up on the beach and rigorously tabooed, or interdicted. He would have launched one himself, but was informed by Tamaahmaah that if he presumed to do so he would be put to death.

Young was obliged to submit, and remained all day in great perplexity to account for this mysterious taboo, and fearful that some hostility was intended. In the evening he learned the cause of it, and his uneasiness was increased. It appeared that the vindictive act of Captain Metcalf had recoiled upon his own head. The schooner Fair American, commanded by his son, following in his track, had fallen into the hands of the natives to the southward of Tocaigh bay, and young Metcalf and four of the crew had been massacred.

On receiving intelligence of this event, Ta-

maahmaah had immediately tabooed all the canoes, and interdicted all intercourse with the ship, lest the captain should learn the fate of the schooner, and take his revenge upon the island. For the same reason he prevented Young from rejoining his countrymen. The Eleanor continued to fire signals from time to time for two days, and then sailed; concluding, no doubt, that the boatswain had deserted.

John Young was in despair when he saw the ship make sail, and found himself abandoned among savages;—and savages, too, sanguinary in their character, and inflamed by acts of hostility. He was agreeably disappointed, however, in experiencing nothing but kind treatment from Tamaahmaah and his people. It is true, he was narrowly watched whenever a vessel came in sight, lest he should escape, and relate what had passed; but at other times he was treated with entire confidence and great distinction. He became a prime favourite, cabinet counsellor, and active coadjutor of Tamaahmaah, attending him in all his excur-

sions, whether of business or pleasure, and aiding in his warlike and ambitious enterprises. By degrees he rose to the rank of a chief, espoused one of the beauties of the island, and became habituated and reconciled to his new way of life; thinking it better, perhaps, to rule among savages than serve among white men; to be a feathered chief than a tarpawling boat-swain. His favour with Tamaahmaah never declined; and when that sagacious, intrepid, and aspiring chieftain had made himself sovereign over the whole group of islands, and removed his residence to Woahoo, he left his faithful adherent John Young in command of Owyhee.

Such is an outline of the history of Governor Young, as furnished by himself; and we regret that we are not able to give any account of the state maintained by this seafaring worthy, and the manner in which he discharged his high functions; though it is evident he had more of the hearty familiarity of the forecastle than the dignity of the gubernatorial office.

These long conferences were bitter trials to the patience of the captain, who had no respect either for the governor or his island, and was anxious to push on in quest of provisions and water. As soon as he could get his inquisitive partners once more on board, he weighed anchor, and made sail for the island of Woahoo, the royal residence of Tamaahmaah.

This is the most beautiful island of the Sandwich group. It is forty-six miles in length and twenty-three in breadth. A ridge of volcanic mountains extends through the centre, rising into lofty peaks, and skirted by undulating hills and rich plains, where the cabins of the natives peep out from beneath groves of coconut and other luxuriant trees.

On the 21st of February the Tonquin cast anchor in the beautiful bay before the village of Waititi (pronounced Whyteetee), the abode of Tamaahmaah. This village contained about two hundred habitations, composed of poles set in the ground, tied together at the ends, and thatched with grass, and was situated in an

open grove of cocoa-nuts. The royal palace of Tamaahmaah was a large house of two stories ; the lower of stone, the upper of wood. Round this his body-guard kept watch, composed of twenty-four men, in long blue cassocks turned up with yellow, and each armed with a musket.

While at anchor in this place, much ceremonious visiting and long conferences took place between the potentate of the islands and the partners of the company. Tamaahmaah came on board of the ship in royal style, in his double pirogue. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, above the middle size, large and well made, though somewhat corpulent. He was dressed in an old suit of regimentals, with a sword by his side, and seemed somewhat embarrassed by his magnificent attire. Three of his wives accompanied him. They were almost as tall, and quite as corpulent as himself ; but by no means to be compared with him in grandeur of habiliments, wearing no other garb than the pau. With him, also, came his great favourite and confidential counsellor, Kraimaker ; who, from holding a post equivalent to

that of prime minister, had been familiarly named Billy Pitt by the British visitors to the islands.

The sovereign was received with befitting ceremonial. The American flag was displayed, four guns were fired, and the partners appeared in scarlet coats, and conducted their illustrious guests to the cabin, where they were regaled with wine. In this interview the partners endeavoured to impress the monarch with a sense of their importance, and of the importance of the association to which they belonged. They let him know that they were eris, or chiefs, of a great company about to be established on the north-west coast, and talked of the probability of opening a trade with his islands, and of sending ships there occasionally. All this was gratifying and interesting to him, for he was aware of the advantages of trade, and desirous of promoting frequent intercourse with white men. He encouraged Europeans and Americans to settle in his islands and intermarry with his subjects. There were between twenty and thirty white men at that time resident in the

island, but many of them were mere vagabonds, who remained there in hopes of leading a lazy and an easy life. For such Tamaahmaah had a great contempt; those only had his esteem and countenance who knew some trade or mechanic art, and were sober and industrious.

On the day subsequent to the monarch's visit, the partners landed and waited upon him in return. Knowing the effect of show and dress upon men in savage life, and wishing to make a favourable impression as the *eris*, or chiefs, of the great American Fur Company, some of them appeared in Highland plaids, and kelts, to the great admiration of the natives.

While visits of ceremony and grand diplomatic conferences were going on between the partners and the king, the captain in his plain matter-of-fact way, was pushing what he considered a far more important negotiation: the purchase of a supply of hogs. He found that the king had profited in more ways than one by his intercourse with white men. Above all other arts he had learned the art of driving a bargain. He was a magnanimous monarch,

but a shrewd pork merchant; and perhaps thought he could not do better with his future allies, the American Fur Company, than to begin by close dealing. Several interviews were requisite, and much bargaining, before he could be brought to part with a bristle of his bacon, and then he insisted upon being paid in hard Spanish dollars; giving as a reason that he wanted money to purchase a frigate from his brother George, as he affectionately termed the king of England.*

* It appears, from the accounts of subsequent voyagers, that Tamaahmaah afterwards succeeded in his wish of purchasing a large ship. In this he sent a cargo of sandal wood to Canton, having discovered that the foreign merchants trading with him made large profits on this wood, shipped by them from the islands to the Chinese markets. The ship was manned by natives, but the officers were Englishmen. She accomplished her voyage, and returned in safety to the islands, with the Hawaiian flag floating gloriously in the breeze. The king hastened on board, expecting to find his sandal wood converted into crapes and damasks, and other rich stuffs of China, but found, to his astonishment, by the ledgerdmain of traffic, his cargo had all disappeared, and, in place of it, remained a bill of charges amounting to *three thousand dollars*. It was some time before he could be made to comprehend certain of the most important items of the bill, such as pilotage, anchorage and custom-house fees; but when he discovered that maritime

At length the royal bargain was concluded; the necessary supply of hogs obtained, beside several goats, two sheep, a quantity of poultry, and vegetables in abundance. The partners now urged to recruit their forces from the natives of this island. They declared they had never seen watermen equal to them, even among the voyageurs of the north-west; and, indeed, they are remarkable for their skill in managing their light craft, and can swim and dive like waterfowl. The partners were inclined, therefore, to take thirty or forty with them to the Columbia, to be employed in the service of the company. The captain, however, objected that there was not room in his vessel for the accommodation of such a number. Twelve, only, were therefore enlisted for the company, and as many more for the service of the ship. The

states in other countries derived large revenues in this manner, to the great cost of the merchant, "Well," cried he, "then I will have harbour fees also." He established them accordingly. Pilotage a dollar a foot on the draft of each vessel. Anchorage from sixty to seventy dollars. In this way he greatly increased the royal revenue, and turned his China speculation to account.

former engaged to serve for the term of three years, during which they were to be fed and clothed; and at the expiration of the time were to receive one hundred dollars in merchandise.

And now, having embarked his live stock, fruits, vegetables, and water, the captain made ready to sail. How much the honest man had suffered in spirit by what he considered the freaks and vagaries of his passengers, and how little he had understood their humours and intentions, is amusingly shown in a letter written to Mr. Astor from Woahoo, which contains his comments on the scenes we have described.

“It would be difficult,” he writes, “to imagine the frantic gambols that are daily played off here; sometimes dressing in red coats, and otherwise very fantastically, and collecting a number of ignorant natives around them, telling them they are the great *eaes* of the northwest, and making arrangements for sending three or four vessels yearly to them from the coast with spars, &c.; while those very natives cannot even furnish a hog to the ship. Then

dressing in Highland plaids and kelts, and making similar arrangements, with presents of rum, wine, or any thing that is at hand. Then taking a number of clerks and men on shore to the very spot on which Captain Cook was killed, and each fetching off a piece of the rock or tree that was touched by the shot. Then setting down with some white man or some native who can be a little understood, and collecting the history of those islands, of Tamaah-maah's wars, the curiosities of the islands, &c., preparatory to the histories of their voyages; and the collection is indeed ridiculously contemptible. To enumerate the thousand instances of ignorance, filth, &c., or to particularize all the frantic gambols that are daily practised, would require volumes."

Before embarking, the great eris of the American Fur Company took leave of their illustrious ally in due style, with many professions of lasting friendship and promises of future intercourse; while the matter-of-fact captain anathematized him in his heart for a grasping, trafficking savage; as shrewd and sordid in his

dealings as a white man. As one of the vessels of the company will, in the course of events, have to appeal to the justice and magnanimity of this island potentate, we shall see how far the honest captain was right in his opinion.

CHAPTER VII.

DEPARTURE FROM THE SANDWICH ISLANDS—MISUNDERSTANDINGS
—MISERIES OF A SUSPICIOUS MAN—ARRIVAL AT COLUMBIA—
DANGEROUS SERVICE—GLOOMY APPREHENSIONS—BARS AND
BREAKERS—PERILS OF THE SHIP—DISASTERS OF A BOAT'S
CREW—BURIAL OF A SANDWICH ISLANDER.

It was on the 28th of February that the Tonquin set sail from the Sandwich islands. For two days the wind was contrary, and the vessel was detained in their neighbourhood; at length a favourable breeze sprang up, and in a little while the rich groves, green hills, and snowy peaks of those happy islands one after another sank from sight, or melted into the blue distance, and the Tonquin ploughed her course towards the sterner regions of the Pacific.

The misunderstandings between the captain

and his passengers still continued; or rather, increased in gravity. By his altercations and his moody humours, he had cut himself off from all community of thought, or freedom of conversation with them. He disdained to ask any questions as to their proceedings, and could only guess at the meaning of their movements, and in so doing indulged in conjectures and suspicions, which produced the most whimsical self-torment.

Thus, in one of his disputes with them, relative to the goods on board, some of the packages of which they wished to open, to take out articles of clothing for the men or presents for the natives, he was so harsh and peremptory that they lost all patience, and hinted that they were the strongest party, and might reduce him to a very ridiculous dilemma, by taking from him the command.

A thought now flashed across the captain's mind that they really had a design to depose him, and that, having picked up some information at Owyhee, possibly of war between the United States and England, they meant to alter

the destination of the voyage ; perhaps to seize upon ship and cargo for their own use.

Once having conceived this suspicion, every thing went to foster it. They had distributed fire-arms among some of their men, a common precaution among the fur traders when mingling with the natives. This, however, looked like preparation. Then several of the partners and clerks and some of the men, being Scotsmen, were acquainted with the Gaelic, and held long conversations together in that language. These conversations were considered by the captain of a "mysterious and unwarrantable nature," and related, no doubt, to some foul conspiracy that was brewing among them. He frankly avows such suspicions, in his letter to Mr. Astor, but intimates that he stood ready to resist any treasonous outbreak ; and seems to think that the evidence of preparation on his part had an effect in overawing the conspirators.

The fact is, as we have since been informed by one of the parties, it was a mischievous pleasure with some of the partners and clerks, who were young men, to play upon the suspicious

temper and splenetic humours of the captain. To this we may ascribe many of their whimsical pranks and absurd propositions, and, above all, their mysterious colloquies in Gaelic.

In this sore and irritable mood did the captain pursue his course, keeping a wary eye on every movement, and bristling up whenever the detested sound of the Gaelic language grated upon his ear. Nothing occurred, however, materially to disturb the residue of the voyage excepting a violent storm; and, on the 22d of March, the Tonquin arrived at the mouth of the Oregon, or Columbia river.

The aspect of the river and the adjacent coast was wild and dangerous. The mouth of the Columbia is upwards of four miles wide, with a peninsular and promontory on one side, and a long low spit of land on the other; between which a sand bar and chain of breakers almost block up the entrance. The interior of the country rises into successive ranges of mountains, which, at the time of the arrival of the Tonquin, were covered with snow.

A fresh wind from the north-west sent a

rough tumbling sea upon the coast, which broke upon the bar in furious surges, and extended a sheet of foam almost across the mouth of the river. Under these circumstances the captain did not think it prudent to approach within three leagues, until the bar should be sounded and the channel ascertained. Mr. Fox, the chief mate, was ordered to this service in the whale-boat, accompanied by John Martin, an old seaman, who had formerly visited the river, and by three Canadians. Fox requested to have regular sailors to man the boat, but the captain would not spare them from the service of the ship, and supposed the Canadians, being expert boatmen on lakes and rivers, were competent to the service, especially when directed and aided by Fox and Martin. Fox seems to have lost all firmness of spirit on the occasion, and to have regarded the service with a misgiving heart. He came to the partners for sympathy, knowing their differences with the captain, and the tears were in his eyes as he represented his case. "I am sent off," said he, "without seamen to man my boat, in boisterous

weather, and on the most dangerous part of the north-west coast. My uncle was lost a few years ago on this same bar, and I am now going to lay my bones alongside of his." The partners sympathized in his apprehensions, and remonstrated with the captain. The latter, however, was not to be moved. He had been displeased with Mr. Fox in the earlier part of the voyage, considering him indolent and inactive; and probably thought his present repugnance arose from a want of true nautical spirit. The interference of the partners in the business of the ship, also, was not calculated to have a favourable effect on a stickler for authority like himself, especially in his actual state of feeling towards them.

At one o'clock, P. M., therefore, Fox and his comrades set off in the whale-boat, which is represented as small in size, and crazy in condition. All eyes were strained after the little bark as it pulled for shore, rising and sinking with the huge rolling waves, until it entered, a mere speck, among the foaming breakers, and was soon lost to view. Evening set in, night

succeeded and passed away, and morning returned, but without the return of the boat.

As the wind had moderated, the ship stood near to the land, so as to command a view of the river's mouth. Nothing was to be seen but a wild chaos of tumbling waves breaking upon the bar, and apparently forming a foaming barrier from shore to shore. Towards night the ship again stood out to gain sea-room, and a gloom was visible in every countenance. The captain himself shared in the general anxiety, and probably repented of his peremptory orders. Another weary and watchful night succeeded, during which the wind subsided, and the weather became serene.

On the following day, the ship having drifted near the land, anchored in fourteen fathoms water, to the northward of the long peninsula or promontory, which forms the north side of the entrance, and is called Cape Disappointment. The pinnace was then manned, and two of the partners, Mr. David Stuart and Mr. M'Kay, set off in the hope of learning something of the fate of the whale-boat. The surf, however, broke with such violence along the

shore, that they could find no landing place. Several of the natives appeared on the beach, and made signs to them to row round the cape, but they thought it most prudent to return to the ship.

The wind now springing up, the *Tonquin* got under way, and stood in to seek the channel, but was again deterred, by the frightful aspect of the breakers, from venturing within a league. Here she hove to; and Mr. Mumford, the second mate, was despatched with four hands, in the pinnace, to sound across the channel until he should find four fathoms depth. The pinnace entered among the breakers, but was near being lost, and with difficulty got back to the ship. The captain insisted that Mr. Mumford had steered too much to the southward. He now turned to Mr. Aiken, an able mariner, destined to command the schooner intended for the coasting trade, and ordered him, together with John Coles, sail-maker, Stephen Weekes, armourer, and two Sandwich islanders, to proceed ahead and take soundings, while the ship should follow under easy sail. In this way

they proceeded until Aiken had ascertained the channel, when signal was given from the ship for him to return on board. He was then within pistol shot, but so furious was the current, and tumultuous the breakers, that the boat became unmanageable, and was hurried away, the crew crying out piteously for assistance. In a few moments she could not be seen from the ship's deck. Some of the passengers climbed to the mizen top, and beheld her still struggling to reach the ship; but shortly after she broached broadside to the waves, and her case seemed desperate. The attention of those on board of the ship was now called to their own safety. They were in shallow water; the vessel struck repeatedly, the waves broke over her, and there was danger of her foundering. At length she got into seven fathoms water, and the wind lulling, and the night coming on, cast anchor. With the darkness their anxieties increased. The wind whistled, the sea roared, the gloom was only broken by the ghastly glare of the foaming breakers, the minds of the seamen were full of dreary apprehensions, and

some of them fancied they heard the cries of their lost comrades mingling with the uproar of the elements. For a time, too, the rapidly ebbing tide threatened to sweep them from their precarious anchorage. At length the reflux of the tide, and the springing up of the wind, enabled them to quit their dangerous situation, and take shelter in a small bay within Cape Disappointment, where they rode in safety during the residue of a stormy night, and enjoyed a brief interval of refreshing sleep.

With the light of day returned their cares and anxieties. They looked out from the mast head over a wild coast, and wilder sea, but could discover no trace of the two boats and their crews that were missing. Several of the natives came on board with peltries, but there was no disposition to trade. They were interrogated by signs after the lost boats, but could not understand the inquiries.

Parties now went on shore and scoured the neighbourhood. One of these was headed by the captain. They had not proceeded far when they beheld a person at a distance in civilized

garb. As he drew near he proved to be Weekes, the armourer. There was a burst of joy, for it was hoped his comrades were near at hand. His story, however, was one of disaster. He and his companions had found it impossible to govern their boat, having no rudder, and being beset by rapid and whirling currents and boisterous surges. After long struggling they had let her go at the mercy of the waves, tossing about, sometimes with her bow, sometimes with her broadside to the surges, threatened each instant with destruction, yet repeatedly escaping, until a huge sea broke over and swamped her. Weekes was overwhelmed by the boiling waves, but emerging above the surface, looked round for his companions. Aiken and Coles were not to be seen; near him were the two Sandwich islanders, stripping themselves of their clothing that they might swim more freely. He did the same, and the boat floating near to him he seized hold of it. The two islanders joined him, and, uniting their forces, they succeeded in turning the boat upon her keel; then bearing down her stern and

rocking her, they forced out so much water that she was able to bear the weight of a man without sinking. One of the islanders now got in, and in a little while baled out the water with his hands. The other swam about and collected the oars, and they all three got once more on board.

By this time the tide had swept them beyond the breakers, and Weekes called on his companions to row for land. They were so chilled and benumbed by the cold, however, that they lost all heart, and absolutely refused. Weekes was equally chilled, but had superior sagacity and self-command. He counteracted the tendency to drowsiness and stupor which cold produces by keeping himself in constant exercise; and seeing that the vessel was advancing, and that every thing depended upon himself, he set to work to scull the boat clear of the bar, and into quiet water.

Towards midnight one of the poor islanders expired: his companion threw himself on his corpse and could not be persuaded to leave him. The dismal night wore away amidst these hor-

rors: as the day dawned, Weekes found himself near the land. He steered directly for it, and at length, with the aid of the surf, ran his boat high upon a sandy beach.

Finding that one of the Sandwich islanders yet gave signs of life, he aided him to leave the boat, and set out with him towards the adjacent woods. The poor fellow, however, was too feeble to follow him, and Weekes was soon obliged to abandon him to his fate and provide for his own safety. Falling upon a beaten path he pursued it, and after a few hours, came to a part of the coast where, to his surprise and joy, he beheld the ship at anchor, and was met by the captain and his party.

After Weekes had related his adventures, three parties were despatched to beat up the coast in search of the unfortunate islander. They returned at night without success, though they had used the utmost diligence. On the following day the search was resumed, and the poor fellow was at length discovered lying beneath a group of rocks, his legs swollen, his feet torn and bloody from walking through

bushes and briars, and himself half dead with cold, hunger, and fatigue. Weekes and this islander were the only survivors of the crew of the jolly-boat, and no trace was ever discovered of Fox and his party. Thus eight men were lost on the first approach to the coast; a commencement that cast a gloom over the spirits of the whole party, and was regarded by some of the superstitious as an omen that boded no good to the enterprise.

Towards night the Sandwich islanders went on shore, to bury the body of their unfortunate countryman who had perished in the boat. On arriving at the place where it had been left, they dug a grave in the sand, in which they deposited the corpse, with a biscuit under one of the arms, some lard under the chin, and a small quantity of tobacco, as provisions for its journey in the land of spirits. Having covered the body with sand and flints, they kneeled along the grave in a double row, with their faces turned to the east, while one who officiated as a priest sprinkled them with water from a hat. In so doing he recited a kind of prayer or invoca-

tion, to which, at intervals, the others made responses. Such were the simple rites performed by these poor savages at the grave of their comrade on the shores of a strange land; and when these were done, they rose and returned in silence to the ship, without once casting a look behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA—THE NATIVE TRIBES—THEIR FISHING—THEIR CANOES—BOLD NAVIGATORS—EQUESTRIAN INDIANS AND PISCATORY INDIANS, DIFFERENCE IN THEIR PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION—SEARCH FOR A TRADING SITE—EXPEDITION OF M'DOUGAL AND DAVID STUART—COMCOMLY, THE ONE-EYED CHIEFTAIN—INFLUENCE OF WEALTH IN SAVAGE LIFE—SLAVERY AMONG THE NATIVES—AN ARISTOCRACY OF FLATHEADS—HOSPITALITY AMONG THE CHINOOKS—COMCOMLY'S DAUGHTER, HER CONQUEST.

THE Columbia, or Oregon, for the distance of thirty or forty miles from its entrance into the sea, is, properly speaking, a mere estuary, indented by deep bays so as to vary from three to seven miles in width; and is rendered extremely intricate and dangerous by shoals reaching nearly from shore to shore, on which, at times, the winds and currents produce foaming and tumultuous breakers. The mouth

of the river proper is but about half a mile wide, formed by the contracting shores of the estuary. The entrance from the sea, as we have already observed, is bounded on the south side by a flat sandy spit of land, stretching into the ocean. This is commonly called Point Adams. The opposite, or northern side, is Cape Disappointment; a kind of peninsula, terminating in a steep knoll or promontory crowned with a forest of pine trees, and connected with the main land by a low and narrow neck. Immediately within this cape is a wide, open bay, terminating at Chinook point, so called from a neighbouring tribe of Indians. This was called Baker's bay, and here the Tonquin was anchored.

The natives inhabiting the lower part of the river, and with whom the company was likely to have the most frequent intercourse, were divided at this time into four tribes, the Chinooks, Clatsops, Wahkiacums, and Cathlamahs. They resembled each other in person, dress, language, and manner; and were probably from the same stock, but broken into tribes, or rather

hordes, by those feuds and schisms frequent among Indians.

These people generally live by fishing. It is true they occasionally hunt the elk and deer, and ensnare the waterfowl of the ponds and rivers, but these are casual luxuries. Their chief subsistence is derived from the salmon and other fish which abound in the Columbia and its tributary streams, aided by roots and herbs, especially the wappatoo, which is found on the islands of the river.

As the Indians of the plains who depend upon the chase are bold and expert riders, and pride themselves upon their horses, so these piscatory tribes of the coast excel in the management of canoes, and are never more at home than when riding upon the waves. Their canoes vary in form and size. Some are upwards of fifty feet long, cut out of a single tree, either fir or white cedar, and capable of carrying thirty persons. They have thwart pieces from side to side about three inches thick, and their gunwales flare outwards, so as to cast off the surges of the waves. The bow and stern are decorated with

grotesque figures of men and animals, sometimes five feet in height.

In managing their canoes they kneel two and two along the bottom, sitting on their heels, and wielding paddles from four to five feet long, while one sits on the stern and steers with a paddle of the same kind. The women are equally expert with the men in managing the canoe, and generally take the helm.

It is surprising to see with what fearless unconcern these savages venture in their light barks upon the roughest and most tempestuous seas. They seem to ride upon the waves like seafowl. Should a surge throw the canoe upon its side and endanger its overturn, those to windward lean over the upper gunwale, thrust their paddles deep into the wave, apparently catch the water and force it under the canoe, and by this action, not merely regain an equilibrium, but give their bark a vigorous impulse forward.

The effect of different modes of life upon the human frame and human character is strikingly instanced in the contrast between the

hunting Indians of the prairies, and the piscatory Indians of the seacoast. The former, continually on horseback scouring the plains, gaining their food by hardy exercise, and subsisting chiefly on flesh, are generally tall, sinewy, meagre, but well-formed, and of bold and fierce deportment: the latter, lounging about the river banks, or squatting and curved up in their canoes, are generally low in stature, ill-shaped with crooked legs, thick ankles, and broad flat feet. They are inferior also in muscular power and activity, and in *game* qualities and appearance to their hard-riding brethren of the prairies.

Having premised these few particulars concerning the neighbouring Indians, we will return to the immediate concerns of the Tonquin and her crew.

Further search was made for Mr. Fox and his party, but with no better success, and they were at length given up as lost. In the meantime, the captain and some of the partners explored the river for some distance in a large boat, to select a suitable place for the trading post. Their old jealousies and differences con-

tinued; they never could coincide in their choice, and the captain objected altogether to any site so high up ~~the~~ the river. They all returned, therefore, to Baker's bay in no very good-humour. The partners proposed to examine the opposite shore, but the captain was impatient of any further delay. His eagerness to "get on" had increased upon him. He thought all these excursions a sheer loss of time, and was resolved to land at once, build a shelter for the reception of that part of his cargo destined for the use of the settlement, and, having cleared his ship of it and of his irksome shipmates, to depart upon the prosecution of his coasting voyage, according to orders.

On the following day, therefore, without troubling himself to consult the partners, he landed in Baker's bay, and proceeded to erect a shed for the reception of the rigging, equipments, and stores of the schooner that was to be built for the use of the settlement.

This dogged determination on the part of the sturdy captain gave high offence to Mr.

M'Dougal, who now considered himself at the head of the concern, as Mr. Astor's representative and proxy. He set off the same day (April 5th), accompanied by Mr. David Stuart, for the southern shore, intending to be back by the seventh. Not having the captain to contend with, they soon pitched upon a spot which appeared to them favourable for the intended establishment. It was on a point of land called point George, having a very good harbour, where vessels, not exceeding two hundred tons burthen, might anchor within fifty yards of the shore.

After a day thus profitably spent, they recrossed the river, but landed on the northern shore, several miles above the anchoring ground of the Tonquin, in the neighbourhood of Chinook, and visited the village of that tribe. Here they were received with great hospitality by the chief, who was named Comcomly, a shrewd old savage, with but one eye, who will occasionally figure in this narrative. Each village forms a petty sovereignty, governed by its own chief, who, however, possesses but little authority, unless he be a man of wealth and substance;

that is to say, possessed of canoes, slaves, and wives. The greater number of these, the greater is the chief. How many wives this one-eyed potentate maintained we are not told, but he certainly possessed great sway, not merely over his own tribe, but over the neighbourhood.

Having mentioned slaves, we would observe that slavery exists among several of the tribes beyond the Rocky mountains. The slaves are well treated while in good health, but occupied in all kinds of drudgery. Should they become useless, however, by sickness or old age, they are totally neglected, and left to perish; nor is any respect paid to their bodies after death.

A singular custom prevails, not merely among the Chinooks, but among most of the tribes about this part of the coast, which is the flattening of the forehead. The process by which this deformity is effected commences immediately after birth. The infant is laid in a wooden trough, by way of cradle. The end on which the head reposes is higher than the rest. A padding is placed on the forehead of the infant, with a piece of bark above it, and is pressed down by cords, which

pass through holes on each side of the trough. As the tightening of the padding and the pressing of the head to the board is gradual, the process is said not to be attended with much pain. The appearance of the infant, however, while in this state of compression, is whimsically hideous, and "its little black eyes," we are told, "being forced out by the tightness of the bandages, resemble those of a mouse choked in a trap."

About a year's pressure is sufficient to produce the desired effect, at the end of which time the child emerges from its bandages a complete flathead, and continues so through life. It must be noted, however, that this flattening of the head has something in it of aristocratical significance, like the crippling of the feet among Chinese ladies of quality. At any rate it is a sign of freedom. No slave is permitted to bestow this enviable deformity upon his child; all the slaves, therefore, are roundheads.

With this worthy tribe of Chinooks the two partners passed a part of a day very agreeably. M'Dougal, who was somewhat vain of his official rank, had given it to be understood that

they were two chiefs of a great trading company, about to be established here, and the quick-sighted, though one-eyed chief, who was somewhat practiced in traffic with white men, immediately perceived the policy of cultivating the friendship of two such important visitors. He regaled them, therefore, to the best of his ability, with abundance of salmon and wappatoo. The next morning, March 7th, they prepared to return to the vessel, according to promise. They had eleven miles of open bay to traverse; the wind was fresh, the waves ran high. Comcomly remonstrated with them on the hazard to which they would be exposed. They were resolute, however, and launched their boat, while the wary chieftain followed at some short distance in his canoe. Scarce had they rowed a mile, when a wave broke over their boat and upset it. They were in imminent peril of drowning, especially Mr. M'Dougal, who could not swim. Comcomly, however, came bounding over the waves in his light canoe, and snatched them from a watery grave.

They were taken on shore and a fire made,

at which they dried their clothes, after which Comcomly conducted them back to his village. Here every thing was done that could be devised for their entertainment during three days that they were detained by bad weather. Comcomly made his people perform antics before them; and his wives and daughters endeavoured, by all the soothing and endearing arts of women, to find favour in their eyes. Some even painted their bodies with red clay, and anointed themselves with fish oil, to give additional lustre to their charms. Mr. M'Dougal seems to have had a heart susceptible to the influence of the gentler sex. Whether or no it was first touched on this occasion we do not learn; but it will be found, in the course of this work, that one of the daughters of the hospitable Comcomly eventually made a conquest of the great eri of the American Fur Company.

When the weather had moderated and the sea become tranquil, the one-eyed chief of the Chinooks manned his state canoe, and conducted his guests in safety to the ship, where they were welcomed with joy, for apprehensions had been

felt for their safety. Comcomly and his people were then entertained on board of the Tonquin, and liberally rewarded for their hospitality and services. They returned home highly satisfied, promising to remain faithful friends and allies of the white men.

CHAPTER IX.

POINT GEORGE—FOUNDING OF ASTORIA—INDIAN VISITERS—THEIR
RECEPTION—THE CAPTAIN TABOO'S THE SHIP—DEPARTURE OF
THE TONQUIN—COMMENTS ON THE CONDUCT OF CAPTAIN THORN.

FROM the report made by the two exploring partners, it was determined that point George should be the site of the trading house. These gentlemen, it is true, were not perfectly satisfied with the place, and were desirous of continuing their search; but Captain Thorn was impatient to land his cargo and continue his voyage, and protested against any more of what he termed "sporting excursions."

Accordingly, on the 12th of April the launch was freighted with all things necessary for the purpose, and sixteen persons departed in her to commence the establishment, leaving the Ton-

quin to follow as soon as the harbour could be sounded.

Crossing the wide mouth of the river, the party landed, and encamped at the bottom of a small bay within point George. The situation chosen for the fortified post was on an elevation facing to the north, with the wide estuary, its sand bars, and tumultuous breakers spread out before it, and the promontory of Cape Disappointment, fifteen miles distant, closing the prospect to the left. The surrounding country was in all the freshness of spring; the trees were in the young leaf, the weather was superb, and every thing looked delightful to men just emancipated from a long confinement on shipboard. The Tonquin shortly afterwards made her way through the intricate channel, and came to anchor in the little bay, and was saluted from the encampment with three volleys of musketry and three cheers. She returned the salute with three cheers and three guns.

All hands now set to work cutting down trees, clearing away thickets, and marking out the place for the residence, storehouse, and powder magazine, which were to be built of

logs, and covered with bark. Others landed the timbers intended for the frame of the coasting vessel, and proceeded to put them together; while others prepared a garden spot, and sowed the seeds of various vegetables.

The next thought was to give a name to the embryo metropolis: the one that naturally presented itself was that of the projector and supporter of the whole enterprise. It was accordingly named ASTORIA.

The neighbouring Indians now swarmed about the place. Some brought a few land-otter and sea-otter skins to barter, but in very scanty parcels; the greater number came prying about to gratify their curiosity, for they are said to be impertinently inquisitive; while not a few came with no other design than to pilfer; the laws of *meum* and *tuum* being but slightly respected among them. Some of them beset the ship in their canoes, among whom was the Chinook chief Comcomly, and his liege subjects. These were well received by Mr. M'Dougal, who was delighted with an opportunity of entering upon his functions and

acquiring importance in the eyes of his future neighbours. The confusion thus produced on board, and the derangement of the cargo caused by this petty trade, stirred the spleen of the captain, who had a sovereign contempt for the one-eyed chieftain and all his crew. He complained loudly of having his ship lumbered by a host of "Indian ragamuffins," who had not a skin to dispose of, and at length put his positive interdict upon all trafficking on board. Upon this Mr. M'Dougal was fain to land, and established his quarters at the encampment, where he could exercise his rights and enjoy his dignities without control.

The feud, however, between these rival powers still continued, but was chiefly carried on by letter. Day after day, and week after week elapsed, yet the storehouses requisite for the reception of the cargo were not completed, and the ship was detained in port; while the captain was teased by frequent requisitions for various articles for the use of the establishment, or the trade with the natives. An angry correspondence took place, in which he complained

bitterly of the time wasted in "smoking and sporting parties," as he termed the reconnoitring expeditions, and in clearing and preparing meadow ground and turnip patches, instead of dispatching his ship. At length all these jarring matters were adjusted, if not to the satisfaction, at least to the acquiescence of all parties. The part of the cargo destined for the use of Astoria was landed, and the ship left free to proceed on her voyage.

As the Tonquin was to coast to the north, to trade for peltries at the different harbours, and to touch at Astoria on her return in the autumn, it was unanimously declared that Mr. M'Kay should go in her as supercargo, taking with him Mr. Lewis as ship's clerk. On the 1st of June the ship got under way, and dropped down to Baker's bay, where she was detained for a few days by a head wind; but early in the morning of the 5th, stood out to sea with a fine breeze and swelling canvass, and swept off gaily on her fatal voyage, from which she was never to return!

On reviewing the conduct of Captain Thorn,

and examining his peevish and somewhat whimsical correspondence, the impression left upon our mind is, upon the whole, decidedly in his favour. While we smile at the simplicity of his heart and the narrowness of his views, which made him regard every thing out of the direct path of his daily duty, and the rigid exigencies of the service, as trivial and impertinent, which inspired him with contempt for the swelling vanity of some of his coadjutors, and the literary exercises and curious researches of others, we cannot but applaud that strict and conscientious devotion to the interests of his employer, and to what he considered the true objects of the enterprise in which he was engaged. He certainly was to blame occasionally for the asperity of his manners, and the arbitrary nature of his measures, yet much that is exceptionable in this part of his conduct may be traced to rigid notions of duty, acquired in that tyrannical school, a ship of war, and to the construction given by his companions to the orders of Mr. Astor, so little in conformity with his own. His mind, too, appears to have

become almost diseased by the suspicions he had formed as to the loyalty of his associates, and the nature of their ultimate designs; yet on this point there were circumstances to, in some measure, justify him. The relations between the United States and Great Britain were at that time in a critical state; in fact, the two countries were on the eve of a war. Several of the partners were British subjects, and might be ready to desert the flag under which they acted, should a war take place. Their application to the British minister at New York shows the dubious feeling with which they had embarked in the present enterprise. They had been in the employ of the North-west Company, and might be disposed to rally again under that association, should events threaten the prosperity of this embryo establishment of Mr. Astor. Beside, we have the fact, averred to us by one of the partners, that some of them, who were young and heedless, took a mischievous and unwarrantable pleasure in playing upon the jealous temper of the captain, and

affecting mysterious consultations and sinister movements.

These circumstances are cited in palliation of the doubts and surmises of Captain Thorn, which might otherwise appear strange and unreasonable. That most of the partners were perfectly upright and faithful in the discharge of the trust reposed in them, we are fully satisfied; still the honest captain was not invariably wrong in his suspicions; and that he formed a pretty just opinion of the integrity of that aspiring personage, Mr. M'Dougal, will be substantially proven in the sequel.

CHAPTER X.

DISQUIETING RUMOURS FROM THE INTERIOR—RECONNOITRING PARTY—PREPARATIONS FOR A TRADING POST—AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL—A SPY IN THE CAMP—EXPEDITION INTO THE INTERIOR—SHORES OF THE COLUMBIA—MOUNT COFFIN—INDIAN SEPULCHRE—THE LAND OF SPIRITS—COLUMBIAN VALLEY—VANCOUVER'S POINT—FALLS AND RAPIDS—A GREAT FISHING MART—THE VILLAGE OF WISH-RAM—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FISHING INDIANS AND HUNTING INDIANS—EFFECTS OF HABITS OF TRADE ON THE INDIAN CHARACTER—POST ESTABLISHED AT THE OAKINAGAN.

WHILE the Astorians were busily occupied in completing their factory and fort, a report was brought to them by an Indian from the upper part of the river, that a party of thirty white men had appeared on the banks of the Columbia, and were actually building houses at the second rapids. This information caused much disquiet. We have already mentioned that the North-west Company had established posts to the west of the Rocky mountains, in

a district called by them New Caledonia, which extended from lat. 52° to 55° north, being within the British territories. It was now apprehended that they were advancing within the American limits, and were endeavouring to seize upon the upper part of the river, and forestal the American Fur Company in the surrounding trade; in which case bloody feuds might be anticipated, such as had prevailed between the rival fur companies in former days.

A reconnoitring party was sent up the river to ascertain the truth of the report. They ascended to the foot of the first rapid, about two hundred miles, but could hear nothing of any white men being in the neighbourhood.

Not long after their return, however, further accounts were received, by two wandering Indians, which established the fact, that the North-west Company had actually erected a trading house on the Spokane river, which falls into the north branch of the Columbia.

What rendered this intelligence the more disquieting, was the inability of the Astorians, in their present reduced state as to numbers,

and the exigencies of their new establishment, to furnish detachments to penetrate the country in different directions, and fix the posts necessary to secure the interior trade.

It was resolved, however, at any rate, to advance a counter check to this post on the Spokane, and one of the partners, Mr. David Stuart, prepared to set out for the purpose with eight men and a small assortment of goods. He was to be guided by the two Indians, who knew the country, and promised to take him to a place not far from the Spokane river, and in a neighbourhood abounding with beaver. Here he was to establish himself and to remain for a time, provided he found the situation advantageous and the natives friendly.

On the 15th of July, when Mr. Stuart was nearly ready to embark, a canoe made its appearance, standing for the harbour, and manned by nine white men. Much speculation took place who these strangers could be, for it was too soon to expect their own people, under Mr. Hunt, who were to cross the continent. As the canoe drew near, the British standard was

distinguished: on coming to land, one of the crew stepped on shore, and announced himself as Mr. David Thompson, astronomer, and partner of the North-west Company. According to his account, he had set out in the preceding year with a tolerable strong party, and a supply of Indian goods, to cross the Rocky mountains. A part of his people, however, had deserted him on the eastern side, and returned with the goods to the nearest north-west post. He had persisted in crossing the mountain with eight men, who remained true to him. They had traversed the higher regions, and ventured near the source of the Columbia, where, in the spring, they had constructed a cedar canoe, the same in which they had reached Astoria.

This, in fact, was the party dispatched by the North-west Company to anticipate Mr. Astor in his intention of effecting a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia river. It appears, from information subsequently derived from other sources, that Mr. Thompson had pushed on his course with great haste, calling at all the Indian

villages in his march, presenting them with British flags, and even planting them at the forks of the rivers, proclaiming formally that he took possession of the country in the name of the king of Great Britain for the North-west Company. As his original plan was defeated by the desertion of his people, it is probable that he descended the river simply to reconnoitre, and ascertain whether an American settlement had been commenced.

Mr. Thompson was, no doubt, the first white man who descended the northern branch of the Columbia from so near its source. Lewis and Clarke struck the main body of the river at the forks, about four hundred miles from its mouth. They entered it from Lewis river, its southern branch, and thence descended.

Though Mr. Thompson could be considered as little better than a spy in the camp, he was received with great cordiality by Mr. M'Dougal, who had a lurking feeling of companionship and good will for all the North-west Company. He invited him to head quarters, where he and his people were hospitably entertained. Nay,

further, being somewhat in extremity, he was furnished by Mr. M'Dougal with goods and provisions for his journey back, across the mountains, much against the wishes of Mr. David Stuart, who did not think the object of his visit entitled him to any favour.

On the 23d of July Mr. Stuart set out upon his expedition to the interior. His party consisted of four of the clerks, Messrs. Pillet, Ross, M'Lennon, and Montigny, two Canadian voyageurs, and two natives of the Sandwich islands. They had three canoes well laden with provisions, and with goods and necessaries for a trading establishment.

Mr. Thompson and his party set out in company with them, it being his intention to proceed direct to Montreal. The partners at Astoria forwarded by him a short letter to Mr. Astor, informing him of their safe arrival at the mouth of the Columbia, and that they had not yet heard of Mr. Hunt. The little squadron of canoes set sail with a favourable breeze, and soon passed Tongue point, a long, high, and rocky promontory, covered with trees, and

stretching far into the river. Opposite to this, on the northern shore, is a deep bay, where the Columbia anchored at the time of the discovery, and which is still called Gray's bay, from the name of her commander.

From hence the general course of the river, for about seventy miles, was nearly south-east; varying in breadth according to its bays and indentations, and navigable for vessels of three hundred tons. The shores were in some places high and rocky, with low marshy islands at their feet, subject to inundation, and covered with willows, poplars, and other trees that love an alluvial soil. Sometimes the mountains receded, and gave place to beautiful plains and noble forests. While the river margin was richly fringed with trees of deciduous foliage, the rough uplands were crowned by majestic pines, and furs of gigantic size, some towering to the height of between two and three hundred feet, with proportionate circumference. Out of these the Indians wrought their great canoes and pirogues.

At one part of the river they passed, on the

northern side, an isolated rock, about one hundred and fifty feet high, rising from a low marshy soil, and totally disconnected with the adjacent mountains. This was held in great reverence by the neighbouring Indians, being one of their principal places of sepulture. The same provident care for the deceased that prevails among the hunting tribes of the prairies is observable among the piscatory tribes of the rivers and seacoast. Among the former, the favourite horse of the hunter is buried with him in the same funereal mound, and his bow and arrows are laid by his side, that he may be perfectly equipped for the "happy hunting grounds" of the land of spirits. Among the latter, the Indian is wrapped in his mantle of skins, laid in his canoe, with his paddle, his fishing spear, and other implements beside him, and placed aloft on some rock or eminence overlooking the river, or bay, or lake, that he has frequented. He is thus fitted out to launch away upon those placid streams and sunny lakes stocked with all kinds of fish and water-fowl, which are prepared in the next world for

those who have acquitted themselves as good sons, good fathers, good husbands, and, above all, good fishermen, during their mortal sojourn.

The isolated rock in question presented a spectacle of the kind, numerous dead bodies being deposited in canoes on its summit; while on poles around were trophies, or rather, funereal offerings of trinkets, garments, baskets of roots, and other articles for the use of the deceased. A reverential feeling protects these sacred spots from robbery or insult. The friends of the deceased, especially the women, repair here at sunrise and sunset for some time after his death, singing his funeral dirge, and uttering loud wailings and lamentations.

From the number of dead bodies in canoes observed upon this rock by the first explorers of the river, it received the name of mount Coffin, which it continues to bear.

Beyond this rock they passed the mouth of a river on the right bank of the Columbia, which appeared to take its rise in a distant mountain, covered with snow. The Indian name of this river was the Cowleskee. Some miles further

on they came to the great Columbian valley, so called by Lewis and Clarke. It is sixty miles in width, and extends far to the south-south-east, between parallel ridges of mountains, which bound it on the east and west. Through the centre of this valley flowed a large and beautiful stream, called the Wallamot,* which came wandering, for several hundred miles, through a yet unexplored wilderness. The sheltered situation of this immense valley had an obvious effect upon the climate. It was a region of great beauty and luxuriance, with lakes and pools, and green meadows shaded by noble groves. Various tribes were said to reside in this valley, and along the banks of the Wallamot.

About eight miles above the mouth of the Wallamot the little squadron arrived at Vancouver's point, so called in honour of that celebrated voyager by his lieutenant (Broughton) when he explored the river. This point is said to present one of the most beautiful scenes on

* Pronounced Wallámot, the accent being upon the second syllable.

the Columbia; a lovely meadow, with a silver sheet of limpid water in the centre, enlivened by wild fowl, a range of hills crowned by forests, while the prospect is closed by mount Hood, a magnificent mountain rising into a lofty peak, and covered with snow; the ultimate landmark of the first explorers of the river.

Point Vancouver is about one hundred miles from Astoria. Here the reflux of the tide ceases to be perceptible. To this place vessels of two and three hundred tons burthen may ascend. The party under the command of Mr. Stuart had been three or four days in reaching it, though we have forborne to notice their daily progress and nightly encampments.

From point Vancouver the river turned towards the north-east, and became more contracted and rapid, with occasional islands and frequent sand banks. These islands are furnished with a number of ponds, and at certain seasons abound with swan, geese, brandts, cranes, gulls, plover, and other wild fowl. The shores, too, are low, and closely wooded, with

such an undergrowth of vines and rushes as to be almost impassable.

About thirty miles above point Vancouver the mountains again approach on both sides of the river, which is bordered by stupendous precipices, covered with the fir and the white cedar, and enlivened occasionally by beautiful cascades leaping from a great height, and sending up wreaths of vapour. One of these precipices, or cliffs, is curiously worn by time and weather, so as to have the appearance of a ruined fortress, with towers and battlements, beetling high above the river; while two small cascades, one hundred and fifty feet in height, pitch down from the fissures of the rocks.

The turbulence and rapidity of the current continually augmenting as they advanced, gave the voyagers intimation that they were approaching the great obstructions of the river, and at length they arrived at Strawberry island, so called by Lewis and Clarke, which lies at the foot of the first rapid. As this part of the Columbia will be repeatedly mentioned in the

course of this work, being the scene of some of its incidents, we shall give a general description of it in this place.

The falls or rapids of the Columbia are situated about one hundred and eighty miles above the mouth of the river. The first is a perpendicular cascade of twenty feet, after which there is a swift descent for a mile, between islands of hard black rock, to another pitch of eight feet divided by two rocks. About two and a half miles below this the river expands into a wide basin, seemingly dammed up by a perpendicular ridge of black rock. A current, however, sets diagonally to the left of this rocky barrier, where there is a chasm forty-five yards in width. Through this the whole body of the river roars along, swelling, and whirling and boiling for some distance in the wildest confusion. Through this tremendous channel the intrepid explorers of the river, Lewis and Clarke, passed safely in their boats; the danger being, not from the rocks, but from the great surges and whirlpools.

At the distance of a mile and a half from the

foot of this narrow channel is a rapid, formed by two rocky islands; and two miles beyond is a second great fall, over a ledge of rocks twenty feet high, extending nearly from shore to shore. The river is again compressed into a channel from fifty to a hundred feet wide, worn through a rough bed of hard black rock, along which it boils and roars with great fury for the distance of three miles. This is called "The Long Narrows."

Here is the great fishing place of the Columbia. In the spring of the year, when the water is high, the salmon ascend the river in incredible numbers. As they pass through this narrow strait, the Indians, standing on the rocks, or on the end of wooden stages projecting from the banks, scoop them up with small nets distended on hoops and attached to long handles, and cast them on shore.

They are then cured and packed in a peculiar manner. After having been disembowelled, they are exposed to the sun on scaffolds erected on the river banks. When sufficiently dry, they are pounded fine between two stones,

pressed into the smallest compass, and packed in baskets or bales of grass matting, about two feet long and one in diameter, lined with the cured skin of a salmon. The top is likewise covered with fish skins, secured by cords passing through holes in the edge of the basket. Packages are then made, each containing twelve of these bales, seven at bottom, five at top, pressed close to each other, with the corded side upward, wrapped in mats and corded. These are placed in dry situations, and again covered with matting. Each of these packages contains from ninety to a hundred pounds of dried fish, which in this state will keep sound for several years.*

We have given this process at some length, as furnished by the first explorers, because it marks a practised ingenuity in preparing articles of traffic for a market, seldom seen among our aborigines. For like reasons we would make especial mention of the village of Wish-ram, at the head of the Long Narrows, as being a solitary instance of an aboriginal trading mart, or

* Lewis and Clarke, vol. ii., p. 32.

emporium. Here the salmon caught in the neighbouring rapids were "warehoused," to await customers. Hither the tribes from the mouth of the Columbia repaired with the fish of the seacoast, the roots, berries, and especially the wappatoo, gathered in the lower parts of the river, together with goods and trinkets obtained from the ships which casually visited the coast. Hither also the tribes from the Rocky mountains brought down horses, bear grass, quamash, and other commodities of the interior. The merchant fishermen at the falls acted as middlemen or factors, and passed the objects of traffic, as it were, cross-handed; trading away part of the wares received from the mountain tribes to those of the river and the plains, and *vice versa*: their packages of pounded salmon entered largely into the system of barter, and being carried off in opposite directions, found their way to the savage hunting camps far in the interior, and to the casual white traders who touched upon the coast.

We have already noticed certain contrarieties of character between the Indian tribes, produced

by their diet and mode of life; and nowhere are they more apparent than about the falls of Columbia. The Indians of this great fishing mart are represented by the earliest explorers as sleeker and fatter, but less hardy and active, than the tribes of the mountains and the prairies, who live by hunting, or of the upper parts of the river, where fish is scanty, and the inhabitants must eke out their subsistence by digging roots or chasing the deer. Indeed, whenever an Indian of the upper country is too lazy to hunt, yet is fond of good living, he repairs to the falls, to live in abundance without labour.

“By such worthless dogs as these,” says an honest trader in his journal, which now lies before us, “by such worthless dogs as these are these noted fishing places peopled, which, like our great cities, may with propriety be called the head quarters of vitiated principles.”

The habits of trade and the avidity of gain have their corrupting effects even in the wilderness, as may be instanced in the members of the aboriginal emporium; for the same jour-

nalist denounces them as "saucy, impudent rascals, who will steal when they can, and pillage whenever a weak party falls in their power."

That he does not belie them will be evidenced hereafter, when we have occasion again to touch at Wish-ram and navigate the rapids. In the present instance the travellers effected the laborious ascent of this part of the river, with all its various portages, without molestation, and once more launched away in smooth water above the high falls.

The two parties continued together, without material impediment, for three or four hundred miles further up the Columbia; Mr. Thompson appearing to take great interest in the success of Mr. Stuart, and pointing out places favourable, as he said, to the establishment of his contemplated trading post.

Mr. Stuart, who distrusted his sincerity, at length pretended to adopt his advice, and, taking leave of him, remained as if to establish himself, while the other proceeded on his course towards the mountains. No sooner, however, had he fairly departed, than Mr. Stuart again

pushed forward, under guidance of the two Indians, nor did he stop until he had arrived within about one hundred and forty miles of the Spokane river, which he considered near enough to keep the rival establishment in check.

The place which he pitched upon for his trading post was a point of land about three miles in length and two in breadth, formed by the junction of the Oakinagan with the Columbia. The former is a river which has its source in a considerable lake about a hundred and fifty miles west of the point of junction. The two rivers, about the place of their confluence, are bordered by immense prairies covered with herbage, but destitute of trees. The point itself was ornamented with wild flowers of every hue, in which innumerable humming-birds were "banqueting nearly the livelong day."

The situation of this point appeared to be well adapted for a trading post. The climate was salubrious, the soil fertile, the rivers well stocked with fish, the natives peaceable and

friendly. There were easy communications with the interior by the upper waters of the Columbia and the lateral stream of the Oakinagan, while the downward current of the Columbia furnished a highway to Astoria.

Availing himself, therefore, of the driftwood which had collected in quantities in the neighbouring bends of the river, Mr. Stuart and his men set to work to erect a house, which in a little while was sufficiently completed for their residence; and thus was established the first interior post of the company. We will now return to notice the progress of affairs at the mouth of the Columbia.

CHAPTER XI.

ALARM AT ASTORIA—RUMOUR OF INDIAN HOSTILITIES—PREPARATIONS FOR DEFENCE—TRAGICAL FATE OF THE TONQUIN.

THE sailing of the Tonquin, and the departure of Mr. David Stuart and his detachment, had produced a striking effect on affairs at Astoria. The natives who had swarmed about the place began immediately to drop off, until at length not an Indian was to be seen. This, at first, was attributed to the want of peltries with which to trade; but in a little while the mystery was explained in a more alarming manner. A conspiracy was said to be on foot among the neighbouring tribes to make a combined attack upon the white men, now that they were so reduced in number. For this purpose there had been

a gathering of warriors in a neighbouring bay, under the pretext of fishing for sturgeon; and fleets of canoes were expected to join them from the north and south. Even Comcomly, the one-eyed chief, notwithstanding his professed friendship for Mr. M'Dougal, was strongly suspected of being concerned in this general combination

Alarmed at rumours of this impending danger, the Astorians suspended their regular labour, and set to work, with all haste, to throw up temporary works for refuge and defence. In the course of a few days they surrounded their dwelling-house and magazines with a picket fence ninety feet square, flanked by two bastions, on which were mounted four four-pounders. Every day they exercised themselves in the use of their weapons, so as to qualify themselves for military duty, and at night they ensconced themselves in their fortress and posted sentinels, to guard against surprise. In this way they hoped, even in case of attack, to be able to hold out until the arrival of the party to be conducted by Mr. Hunt across the Rocky

mountains, or until the return of the Tonquin. The latter dependance, however, was doomed soon to be destroyed. Early in August, a wandering band of savages from the strait of Juan de Fuca, made their appearance at the mouth of the Columbia, where they came to fish for sturgeon. They brought disastrous accounts of the Tonquin, which were at first treated as mere fables, but which were too sadly confirmed by a different tribe that arrived a few days subsequently. We shall relate the circumstances of this melancholy affair as correctly as the casual discrepancies in the statements that have reached us will permit.

We have already stated that the Tonquin set sail from the mouth of the river on the 5th of June. The whole number of persons on board amounted to twenty-three. In one of the outer bays they picked up, from a fishing canoe, an Indian named Lamazee, who had already made two voyages along the coast, and knew something of the languages of the various tribes. He agreed to accompany them as interpreter.

Steering to the north, Captain Thorn arrived

in a few days at Vancouver's island, and anchored in the harbour of Neweetee, very much against the advice of his Indian interpreter, who warned him against the perfidious character of the natives of this part of the coast. Numbers of canoes soon came off, bringing sea-otter skins to sell. It was too late in the day to commence a traffic, but Mr. M'Kay, accompanied by a few of the men, went on shore to a large village to visit Wicananish, the chief of the surrounding territory, six of the natives remaining on board as hostages. He was received with great professions of friendship, entertained hospitably, and a couch of sea-otter skins was prepared for him in the dwelling of the chieftain, where he was prevailed upon to pass the night.

In the morning, before Mr. M'Kay had returned to the ship, great numbers of the natives came off in their canoes to trade, headed by two sons of Wicananish. As they brought abundance of sea-otter skins, and there was every appearance of a brisk trade, Captain Thorn did not wait for the return of Mr. M'Kay, but spread out his wares upon the deck, making a

tempting display of blankets, cloths, knives, beads, and fish-hooks, expecting a prompt and profitable sale. The Indians, however, were not so eager and simple as he had supposed, having learned the art of bargaining and the value of merchandise from the casual traders along the coast. They were guided, too, by a shrewd old chief named Nookamis, who had grown gray in traffic with New England skippers, and prided himself upon his acuteness. His opinion seemed to regulate the market. When Captain Thorn made what he considered a liberal offer for an otter skin, the wily old Indian treated it with scorn, and asked more than double. His comrades all took their cue from him, and not an otter skin was to be had at a reasonable rate.

The old fellow, however, overshot his mark, and mistook the character of the man he was treating with. Thorn was a plain, straightforward sailor, who never had two minds nor two prices in his dealings, was deficient in patience and pliancy, and totally wanting in the chicanery of traffic. He had a vast deal of stern, but honest pride in his nature, and, moreover, held the

whole savage race in sovereign contempt. Abandoning all further attempts, therefore, to bargain with his shuffling customers, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and paced up and down the deck in sullen silence. The cunning old Indian followed him to and fro, holding out a sea-otter skin to him at every turn, and pestering him to trade. Finding other means unavailing, he suddenly changed his tone, and began to jeer and banter him upon the mean prices he offered. This was too much for the patience of the captain, who was never remarkable for relishing a joke, especially when at his own expense. Turning suddenly upon his persecutor, he snatched the proffered otter skin from his hands, rubbed it in his face, and dismissed him over the side of the ship with no very complimentary application to accelerate his exit. He then kicked the peltries to the right and left about the deck, and broke up the market in the most ignominious manner. Old Nookamis made for shore in a furious passion, in which he was joined by Shewish, one of the sons of Wicananish, who went off breathing vengeance,

and the ship was soon abandoned by the natives.

When Mr. M'Kay returned on board, the interpreter related what had passed, and begged him to prevail upon the captain to make sail, as, from his knowledge of the temper and pride of the people of the place, he was sure they would resent the indignity offered to one of their chiefs. Mr. M'Kay, who himself possessed some experience of Indian character, went to the captain, who was still pacing the deck in moody humour, represented the danger to which his hasty act had exposed the vessel, and urged him to weigh anchor. The captain made light of his councils, and pointed to his cannon and fire-arms as a sufficient safeguard against naked savages. Further remonstrances only provoked taunting replies and sharp alterations. The day passed away without any signs of hostility, and at night the captain retired as usual to his cabin, taking no more than the usual precautions.

On the following morning, at daybreak, while the captain and Mr. M'Kay were yet asleep, a

canoe came alongside in which were twenty Indians, commanded by young Shewish. They were unarmed, their aspect and demeanour friendly, and they held up otter skins, and made signs indicative of a wish to trade. The caution enjoined by Mr. Astor, in respect to the admission of Indians on board of the ship, had been neglected for some time past; and the officer of the watch, perceiving those in the canoe to be without weapons, and having received no orders to the contrary, readily permitted them to mount the deck. Another canoe soon succeeded, the crew of which was likewise admitted. In a little while other canoes came off, and Indians were soon clambering into the vessel on all sides.

The officer of the watch now felt alarmed, and called to Captain Thorn and Mr. M'Kay. By the time they came on deck, it was thronged with Indians. The interpreter noticed to Mr. M'Kay that many of the natives wore short mantles of skins, and intimated a suspicion that they were secretly armed. Mr. M'Kay urged the captain to clear the ship and get under way.

He again made light of the advice; but the augmented swarm of canoes about the ship, and the numbers still putting off from shore, at length awakened his distrust, and he ordered some of the crew to weigh anchor, while some were sent aloft to make sail.

The Indians now offered to trade with the captain on his own terms, prompted, apparently, by the approaching departure of the ship. Accordingly, a hurried trade was commenced. The main articles sought by the savages in barter, were knives; as fast as some were supplied they moved off, and others succeeded. By degrees they were thus distributed about the deck, and all with weapons.

The anchor was now nearly up, the sails were loose, and the captain, in a loud and peremptory tone, ordered the ship to be cleared. In an instant a signal yell was given: it was echoed on every side, knives and war-clubs were brandished in every direction, and the savages rushed upon their marked victims.

The first that fell was Mr. Lewis, the ship's clerk. He was leaning, with folded arms, over

a bale of blankets, engaged in bargaining, when he received a deadly stab in the back, and fell down the companionway.

Mr. M'Kay, who was seated on the taffrail, sprang on his feet, but was instantly knocked down with a war-club and flung backwards into the sea, where he was despatched by the women in the canoes.

In the mean time, Captain Thorn made desperate fight against fearful odds. He was a powerful as well as resolute man, but he had come upon deck without weapons. Shewish, the young chief, singled him out as his peculiar prey, and rushed upon him at the first outbreak. The captain had barely time to draw a clasp-knife, with one blow of which he laid the young savage dead at his feet. Several of the stoutest followers of Shewish now set upon him. He defended himself vigorously, dealing crippling blows to right and left, and strewing the quarter-deck with the slain and wounded. His object was, to fight his way to the cabin, where there were fire-arms ; but he was hemmed in with foes, covered with wounds, and faint with loss of

blood. For an instant he leaned upon the tiller wheel, when a blow from behind, with a war-club, felled him to the deck, where he was despatched with knives and thrown overboard.

While this was transacting upon the quarter-deck, a chance medley fight was going on throughout the ship. The crew fought desperately with knives, handspikes, and whatever weapon they could seize upon in the moment of surprise. They were soon, however, overpowered by numbers, and mercilessly butchered.

As to the seven who had been sent aloft to make sail, they contemplated with horror the carnage that was going on below. Being destitute of weapons, they let themselves down by the running rigging, in hopes of getting between decks. One fell in the attempt, and was instantly despatched; another received a death-blow in the back as he was descending; a third, Stephen Weekes, the armourer, was mortally wounded as he was getting down the hatchway.

The remaining four made good their retreat into the cabin, where they found Mr. Lewis,

still alive, though mortally wounded. Barri-
cading the cabin door, they broke holes through
the companionway, and, with the muskets and
ammunition which were at hand, opened a brisk
fire that soon cleared the deck.

Thus far the Indian interpreter, from whom
these particulars are derived, had been an eye-
witness of the deadly conflict. He had taken
no part in it, and had been spared by the natives
as being of their race. In the confusion of the
moment he took refuge with the rest, in the
canoes. The survivors of the crew now sallied
forth, and discharged some of the deck guns,
which did great execution among the canoes,
and drove all the savages to shore.

For the remainder of the day no one ventured
to put off to the ship, deterred by the effects of
the fire-arms. The night passed away without
any further attempt on the part of the natives.
When the day dawned, the Tonquin still lay at
anchor in the bay, her sails all loose and flap-
ping in the wind, and no one apparently on
board of her. After a time, some of the canoes
ventured forth to reconnoitre, taking with them

the interpreter. They paddled about her, keeping cautiously at a distance, but growing more and more imboldened at seeing her quiet and lifeless. One man at length made his appearance on the deck, and was recognised by the interpreter as Mr. Lewis. He made friendly signs, and invited them on board. It was long before they ventured to comply. Those who mounted the deck met with no opposition; no one was to be seen on board; for Mr. Lewis, after inviting them, had disappeared. Other canoes now pressed forward to board the prize; the decks were soon crowded, and the sides covered with clambering savages, all intent on plunder. In the midst of their eagerness and exultation, the ship blew up with a tremendous explosion. Arms, legs, and mutilated bodies were blown into the air, and dreadful havoc was made in the surrounding canoes. The interpreter was in the main chains at the time of the explosion, and was thrown unhurt into the water, where he succeeded in getting into one of the canoes. According to his statement, the bay presented an awful spectacle after the

catastrophe. The ship had disappeared, but the bay was covered with fragments of the wreck, with shattered canoes, and Indians swimming for their lives, or struggling in the agonies of death; while those who had escaped the danger remained aghast and stupified, or made with frantic panic for the shore. Upwards of a hundred savages were destroyed by the explosion, many more were shockingly mutilated, and for days afterwards the limbs and bodies of the slain were thrown upon the beach.

The inhabitants of Neweetee were overwhelmed with consternation at this astounding calamity, which had burst upon them in the very moment of triumph. The warriors sat mute and mournful, while the women filled the air with loud lamentations. Their weeping and wailing, however, was suddenly changed into yells of fury at the sight of four unfortunate white men, brought captive into the village. They had been driven on shore in one of the ship's boats, and taken at some distance along the coast.

The interpreter was permitted to converse with them. They proved to be the four brave fellows who had made such desperate defence from the cabin. The interpreter gathered from them some of the particulars already related. They told him further, that, after they had beaten off the enemy, and cleared the ship, Lewis advised that they should slip the cable and endeavour to get to sea. They declined to take his advice, alleging that the wind set too strongly into the bay, and would drive them on shore. They resolved, as soon as it was dark, to put off quietly in the ship's boat, which they would be able to do unperceived, and to coast along back to Astoria. They put their resolution into effect; but Lewis refused to accompany them, being disabled by his wound, hopeless of escape, and determined on a terrible revenge. On the voyage out, he had repeatedly expressed a presentiment that he should die by his own hands; thinking it highly probable that he should be engaged in some contest with the natives, and being resolved, in case of extremity, to commit suicide, rather than be made

a prisoner. He now declared his intention to remain on board of the ship until daylight, to decoy as many of the savages on board as possible, then to set fire to the powder magazine, and terminate his life by a signal act of vengeance. How well he succeeded has been shown. His companions bade him a melancholy adieu, and set off on their precarious expedition. They strove with might and main to get out of the bay, but found it impossible to weather a point of land, and were at length compelled to take shelter in a small cove, where they hoped to remain concealed until the wind should be more favourable. Exhausted by fatigue and watching, they fell into a sound sleep, and in that state were surprised by the savages. Better had it been for those unfortunate men had they remained with Lewis, and shared his heroic death: as it was, they perished in a more painful and protracted manner, being sacrificed by the natives to the manes of their friends with all the lingering tortures of savage cruelty. Some time after their death, the interpreter, who had remained a kind of prisoner at large,

effected his escape, and brought the tragical tidings to Astoria.

Such is the melancholy story of the Tonquin, and such was the fate of her brave, but headstrong commander, and her adventurous crew. It is a catastrophe that shows the importance, in all enterprises of moment, to keep in mind the general instructions of the sagacious heads which devise them. Mr. Astor was well aware of the perils to which ships were exposed on this coast from quarrels with the natives, and from perfidious attempts of the latter to surprise and capture them in unguarded moments. He had repeatedly enjoined it upon Captain Thorn, in conversation, and at parting, in his letter of instructions, to be courteous and kind in his dealings with the savages, but by no means to confide in their apparent friendship, *nor to admit more than a few on board of his ship at a time.*

Had the deportment of Captain Thorn been properly regulated, the insult so wounding to savage pride would never have been given. Had he enforced the rule to admit but a few at a

time, the savages would not have been able to get the mastery. He was too irritable, however, to practise the necessary self-command, and, having been nurtured in a proud contempt of danger, thought it beneath him to manifest any fear of a crew of unarmed savages.

With all his faults and foibles, we cannot but speak of him with esteem, and deplore his untimely fate; for we remember him well in early life, as a companion in pleasant scenes and joyous hours. When on shore, among his friends, he was a frank, manly, sound-hearted sailor. On board ship he evidently assumed the hardness of deportment and sternness of demeanour which many deem essential to naval service. Throughout the whole of the expedition, however, he showed himself loyal, single-minded, straightforward, and fearless; and if the fate of his vessel may be charged to his harshness and imprudence, we should recollect that he paid for his error with his life.

The loss of the *Tonquin* was a grievous blow to the infant establishment of Astoria, and one that threatened to bring after it a train of

disasters. The intelligence of it did not reach Mr. Astor until many months afterwards. He felt it in all its force, and was aware that it must cripple, if not entirely defeat, the great scheme of his ambition. In his letters, written at the time, he speaks of it as "a calamity, the length of which he could not foresee." He indulged, however, in no weak and vain lamentation, but sought to devise a prompt and efficient remedy. The very same evening he appeared at the theatre with his usual serenity of countenance. A friend, who knew the disastrous intelligence he had received, expressed his astonishment that he could have calmness of spirit sufficient for such a scene of light amusement. "What would you have me to do?" was his characteristic reply; "would you have me stay at home and weep for what I cannot help?"

CHAPTER XII.

GLOOM AT ASTORIA—AN INGENIOUS STRATAGEM—THE SMALLPOX CHIEF—LAUNCHING OF THE DOLLY—AN ARRIVAL—A CANADIAN TRAPPER—A FREEMAN OF THE FOREST—AN IROQUOIS HUNTER—WINTER ON THE COLUMBIA—FESTIVITIES OF NEW-YEAR.

THE tidings of the loss of the Tonquin, and massacre of her crew, struck dismay into the hearts of the Astorians. They found themselves a mere handful of men, on a savage coast, surrounded by hostile tribes, who would doubtless be incited and encouraged to deeds of violence by the late fearful catastrophe. In this juncture Mr. M'Dougal, we are told, had recourse to a stratagem by which to avail himself of the ignorance and credulity of the savages, and which certainly does credit to his ingenuity.

The natives of the coast, and, indeed, of all the regions west of the mountains, had an extreme dread of the smallpox; that terrific scourge having, a few years previously, appeared among them, and almost swept off entire tribes. Its origin and nature were wrapped in mystery, and they conceived it an evil inflicted upon them by the Great Spirit, or brought among them by the white men. The last idea was seized upon by Mr. M'Dougal. He assembled several of the chieftains whom he believed to be in the conspiracy. When they were all seated around, he informed them that he had heard of the treachery of some of their northern brethren towards the Tonquin, and was determined on vengeance. "The white men among you," said he, "are few in number, it is true, but they are mighty in medicine. See here," continued he, drawing forth a small bottle and holding it before their eyes, "in this bottle I hold the smallpox, safely corked up; I have but to draw the cork, and let loose the pestilence, to sweep man, woman, and child, from the face of the earth!"

The chiefs were struck with horror and alarm. They implored him not to uncork the bottle, since they and all their people were firm friends of the white men, and would always remain so; but, should the smallpox be once let out, it would run like wildfire throughout the country, sweeping off the good as well as the bad; and surely he would not be so unjust as to punish his friends for crimes committed by his enemies.

Mr. M'Dougal pretended to be convinced by their reasoning, and assured them that, so long as the white people should be unmolested, and the conduct of their Indian neighbours friendly and hospitable, the phial of wrath should remain sealed up; but, on the least act of hostility, the fatal cork should be drawn.

From this time, it is added, he was much dreaded by the natives as one who held their fate in his hands, and was called, by way of pre-eminence, "the Great Smallpox Chief."

All this while, the labours at the infant settlement went on with unremitting assiduity, and, by the 26th of September, a commodious

mansion, spacious enough to accommodate all hands, was completed. It was built of stone and clay, there being no calcareous stone in the neighbourhood from which lime for mortar could be procured. The schooner was also finished, and launched, with the accustomed ceremony, on the 2d of October, and took her station below the fort. She was named the Dolly, and was the first American vessel launched on this coast.

On the 5th of October, in the evening, the little community at Astoria was enlivened by the unexpected arrival of a detachment from Mr. David Stuart's post on the Oakinagan. It consisted of two of the clerks and two of the privates. They brought favourable accounts of the new establishment, but reported that, as Mr. Stuart was apprehensive there might be a difficulty of subsisting his whole party throughout the winter, he had sent one half back to Astoria, retaining with him only Ross, Montigny, and two others. Such is the hardihood of the Indian trader. In the heart of a savage

and unknown country, seven hundred miles from the main body of his fellow-adventurers, Stuart had dismissed half of his little number, and was prepared with the residue to brave all the perils of the wilderness, and the rigours of a long and dreary winter.

With the return party came a Canadian creole named Regis Brugiere, and an Iroquois hunter, with his wife and two children. As these two personages belong to certain classes which have derived their peculiar characteristics from the fur trade, we deem some few particulars concerning them pertinent to the nature of this work.

Brugiere was of a class of beaver-trappers and hunters technically called freemen, in the language of the traders. They are generally Canadians by birth, and of French descent, who have been employed for a term of years by some fur company, but their term being expired, continue to hunt and trap on their own account, trading with the company like the Indians. Hence they derive their appellation of freemen,

to distinguish them from the trappers, who are bound for a number of years, and receive wages, or hunt on shares.

Having passed their early youth in the wilderness, separated almost entirely from civilized man, and in frequent intercourse with the Indians, they lapse, with a facility common to human nature, into the habitudes of savage life. Though no longer bound by engagements to continue in the interior, they have become so accustomed to the freedom of the forest and the prairie, that they look back with repugnance upon the restraints of civilization. Most of them intermarry with the natives, and like the latter, have often a plurality of wives. Wanderers of the wilderness, according to the vicissitudes of the seasons, the migrations of animals, and the plenty or scarcity of game, they lead a precarious and unsettled existence; exposed to sun and storm, and all kinds of hardships, until they resemble the Indians in complexion as well as in tastes and habits. From time to time they bring the peltries they

have collected to the trading houses of the company in whose employ they have been brought up. Here they traffic them away for such articles of merchandise or ammunition as they may stand in need of. At the time when Montreal was the great emporium of the fur trader, one of these freemen of the wilderness would suddenly return, after an absence of many years, among his old friends and comrades. He would be greeted as one risen from the dead; and with the greater welcome, as he returned flush of money. A short time, however, spent in revelry, would be sufficient to drain his purse and sate him with civilized life, and he would return with new relish to the unshackled freedom of the forest.

Numbers of men of this class were scattered throughout the north-west territories. Some of them retained a little of the thrift and forethought of the civilized man, and became wealthy among their improvident neighbours; their wealth being chiefly displayed in large bands of horses, which covered the prairies in

the vicinity of their abodes. Most of them, however, were prone to assimilate to the red man in their heedlessness of the future.

Such was Regis Brugiere, a freeman and rover of the wilderness. Having been brought up in the service of the North-west Company, he had followed in the train of one of its expeditions across the Rocky mountains, and undertaken to trap for the trading post established on the Spokane river. In the course of his hunting excursions he had either accidentally, or designedly, found his way to the post of Mr. Stuart, and been prevailed upon to descend the Columbia, and "try his luck" at Astoria.

Ignace Shonowane, the Iroquois hunter, was a specimen of a different class. He was one of those aboriginals of Canada who had partially conformed to the habits of civilization, and the doctrines of Christianity, under the influence of the French colonists and the Catholic priests; who seem generally to have been more successful in conciliating, taming, and converting the savages, than their English and Protestant rivals. These half civilized Indians retained some of

the good, and many of the evil qualities of their original stock. They were first-rate hunters, and dexterous in the management of the canoe. They could undergo great privations, and were admirable for the service of the rivers, lakes, and forests, provided they could be kept sober, and in proper subordination ; but, once inflamed with liquor, to which they were madly addicted, all the dormant passions, inherent in their nature, were prone to break forth, and to hurry them into the most vindictive and bloody acts of violence.

Though they generally professed the Roman Catholic religion, yet it was mixed, occasionally, with some of their ancient superstitions ; and they retained much of the Indian belief in charms and omens. Numbers of these men were employed by the North-west Company as trappers, hunters, and canoe men, but on lower terms than were allowed to white men. Ignace Shonowane had, in this way, followed the enterprise of the company to the banks of the Spokan, being, probably, one of the first of his tribe that had traversed the Rocky mountains.

Such were some of the motley populace of the wilderness, incident to the fur trade, who were gradually attracted to the new settlement of Astoria.

The month of October now began to give indications of approaching winter. Hitherto, the colonists had been well pleased with the climate. The summer had been temperate, the mercury never rising above eighty degrees. Westerly winds had prevailed during the spring and the early part of summer, and been succeeded by fresh breezes from the north-west. In the month of October the southerly winds set in, bringing with them frequent rain.

The Indians now began to quit the borders of the ocean, and to retire to their winter quarters in the sheltered bosom of the forests, or along the small rivers and brooks. The rainy season, which commences in October, continues, with little intermission, until April; and though the winters are generally mild, the mercury seldom sinking below the freezing point, yet the tempests of wind and rain are terrible. The sun is sometimes obscured for weeks, the brooks

swell into roaring torrents, and the country is threatened with a deluge.

The departure of the Indians to their winter quarters gradually rendered provisions scanty, and obliged the colonists to send out foraging expeditions in the Dolly. Still, the little handful of adventurers kept up their spirits in their lonely fort at Astoria, looking forward to the time when they should be animated and reinforced by the party under Mr. Hunt, that was to come to them across the Rocky mountains.

The year gradually wore away. The rain, which had poured down almost incessantly since the 1st of October, cleared up towards the evening of the 31st of December, and the morning of the 1st of January ushered in a day of sunshine.

The hereditary French holyday spirit of the Canadian voyageurs is hardly to be depressed by any adversities; and they can manage to get up a *fête* in the most squalid situations, and under the most untoward circumstances. An extra allowance of rum, and a little flour to

make cakes and puddings, constitute a "regale;" and they forget all their toils and troubles in the song and the dance.

On the present occasion, the partners endeavoured to celebrate the new year with some effect. At sunrise the drums beat to arms, the colours were hoisted, with three rounds of small arms and three discharges of cannon. The day was devoted to games of agility and strength, and other amusements; and grog was temperately distributed, together with bread, butter, and cheese. The best dinner their circumstances could afford was served up at mid-day. At sunset the colours were lowered with another discharge of artillery. The night was spent in dancing; and, though there was a lack of female partners to excite their gallantry, the voyageurs kept up the ball, with true French spirit, until three o'clock in the morning. So passed the new-year festival of 1812 at the infant colony of Astoria.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPEDITION BY LAND—WILSON P. HUNT—HIS CHARACTER—
DONALD M'KENZIE—RECRUITING SERVICE AMONG THE VOYA-
GEURS—A BARK CANOE—CHAPEL OF ST. ANNE—VOTIVE OFFER-
INGS—PIOUS CAROUSALS—A RAGGED REGIMENT—MACKINAW—
PICTURE OF A TRADING POST—FROLICKING VOYAGEURS—
SWELLS AND SWAGGERERS—INDIAN COXCOMES—A MAN OF
THE NORTH—JOCKEYSHIP OF VOYAGEURS—INEFFICACY OF GOLD
—WEIGHT OF A FEATHER—MR. RAMSAY CROOKS—HIS CHA-
RACTER—HIS RISKS AMONG THE INDIANS—HIS WARNING
CONCERNING SIOUX AND BLACKFEET—EMBARKATION OF
RECRUITS—PARTING SCENES BETWEEN BROTHERS, COUSINS,
WIVES, SWEETHEARTS, AND POT COMPANIONS.

WE have followed up the fortunes of the maritime part of this enterprise to the shores of the Pacific, and have conducted the affairs of the embryo establishment to the opening of the new-year; let us now turn back to the adventurous band to whom was intrusted the land expedition, and who were to make their way

to the mouth of the Columbia, up vast rivers, across trackless plains, and over the rugged barriers of the Rocky mountains.

The conduct of this expedition, as has been already mentioned, was assigned to Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, of Trenton, New Jersey, one of the partners of the company, who was ultimately to be at the head of the establishment at the mouth of the Columbia. He is represented as a man scrupulously upright and faithful in his dealings, amiable in his disposition, and of most accommodating manners; and his whole conduct will be found in unison with such a character. He was not practically experienced in the Indian trade; that is to say, he had never made any expeditions of traffic into the heart of the wilderness, but he had been engaged in commerce at St. Louis, then a frontier settlement on the Mississippi, where the chief branch of his business had consisted in furnishing Indian traders with goods and equipments. In this way, he had acquired much knowledge of the trade at second hand, and of the various tribes, and the interior country over which it extended.

Another of the partners, Mr. Donald M'Kenzie, was associated with Mr. Hunt in the expedition, and excelled on those points in which the other was deficient; for he had been ten years in the interior, in the service of the Northwest Company and valued himself on his knowledge of "woodcraft," and the strategy of Indian trade and Indian warfare. He had a frame seasoned to toils and hardships; a spirit not to be intimidated. and was reputed to be a "remarkable shot;" which of itself, was sufficient to give him renown upon the frontier.

Mr. Hunt and his coadjutor repaired, about the latter part of July, 1810, to Montreal, the ancient emporium of the fur trade, where every thing requisite for the expedition could be procured. One of the first objects was to recruit a complement of Canadian voyageurs from the disbanded herd usually to be found loitering about the place. A degree of jockeyship, however, is required for this service, for a Canadian voyageur is as full of latent tricks and vice as a horse; and when he makes the greatest external promise, is prone to prove the greatest "take

in." Beside, the North-west Company, who maintained a long established control at Montreal, and knew the qualities of every voyageur, secretly interdicted the prime hands from engaging in this new service; so that, although liberal terms were offered, few presented themselves but such as were not worth having.

From these, Mr. Hunt engaged a number sufficient, as he supposed, for present purposes; and, having laid in a supply of ammunition, provisions, and Indian goods, embarked all on board of one of those great canoes at that time universally used by the fur traders for navigating the intricate and often obstructed rivers. The canoe was between thirty and forty feet long, and several feet in width; constructed of birch bark, sewed with fibres of the roots of the spruce tree, and daubed with resin of the pine, instead of tar. The cargo was made up in packages, weighing from ninety to one hundred pounds each, for the facility of loading and unloading, and of transportation at portages. The canoe itself, though capable of sustaining a freight of upwards of four tons, could readily

be carried on men's shoulders. Canoes of this size are generally managed by eight or ten men, two of whom are picked veterans, who receive double wages, and are stationed, one at the bow, and the other at the stern, to keep a look out, and to steer. They are termed the foreman and the steersman. The rest, who ply the paddles, are called middle men. When there is a favourable breeze, the canoe is occasionally navigated with a sail.

The expedition took its regular departure, as usual, from St. Anne's near the extremity of the island of Montreal, the great starting place of traders to the interior. Here stood the ancient chapel of St. Anne, the patroness of the Canadian voyageurs; where they made confession and offered up their vows, previous to departing on any hazardous expedition. The shrine of the saint was decorated with relics and votive offerings hung up by these superstitious beings, either to propitiate her favour, or in gratitude for some signal deliverance in the wilderness. It was the custom, too, of these devout vagabonds, after leaving the chapel, to have a grand

carouse, in honour of the saint and for the prosperity of the voyage. In this part of their devotions, the crew of Mr. Hunt proved themselves by no means deficient. Indeed, he soon discovered that his recruits, enlisted at Montreal, were fit to vie with the ragged regiment of Falstaff. Some were able-bodied, but inexperienced; others were expert, but lazy; while a third class were expert and willing, but totally worn out, being broken down veterans, incapable of toil.

With this inefficient crew he made his way up the Ottawa river, and by the ancient route of the fur traders, along a succession of small lakes and rivers, to Michilimackinac. Their progress was slow and tedious. Mr. Hunt was not accustomed to the management of "voyageurs," and he had a crew admirably disposed to play the old soldier, and balk their work; and ever ready to come to a halt, land, make a fire, put on the great pot, and smoke, and gossip, and sing by the hour.

It was not until the 22d of July that they arrived at Mackinaw, situated on the island of

the same name, at the confluence of lakes Huron and Michigan. This famous old French trading post continued to be a rallying point for a multifarious and motley population. The inhabitants were amphibious in their habits, most of them being, or having been, voyageurs or canoe men. It was the great place of arrival and departure of the south-west fur trade. Here the Mackinaw Company had established its principal post, from whence it communicated with the interior and with Montreal. Hence its various traders and trappers set out for their respective destinations about lake Superior and its tributary waters, or for the Mississippi, the Arkansas, the Missouri, and the other regions of the west. Here, after the absence of a year or more, they returned with their peltries, and settled their accounts; the furs rendered in by them being transmitted, in canoes, from hence to Montreal. Mackinaw was, therefore, for a great part of the year, very scantily peopled; but at certain seasons the traders arrived from all points, with their crews of voyageurs, and the place swarmed like a hive.

Mackinaw, at that time, was a mere village, stretching along a small bay, with a fine broad beach in front of its principal row of houses, and dominated by the old fort, which crowned an impending height. The beach was a kind of public promenade, where were displayed all the vagaries of a seaport on the arrival of a fleet from a long cruise. Here voyageurs frolicked away their wages, fiddling and dancing in the booths and cabins, buying all kinds of knick-knacks, dressing themselves out finely, and parading up and down, like arrant braggarts and coxcombs. Sometimes they met with rival coxcombs in the young Indians from the opposite shore, who would appear on the beach painted and decorated in fantastic style, and would saunter up and down, to be gazed at and admired, perfectly satisfied that they eclipsed their palefaced competitors.

Now and then a chance party of “ North-westerns” appeared at Mackinaw from the rendezvous at fort William. These held themselves up as the chivalry of the fur trade. They were men of iron; proof against cold weather, hard

fare, and perils of all kinds. Some would wear the north-west button, and a formidable dirk, and assume something of a military air. They generally wore feathers in their hats, and affected the "brave." "Je suis un homme du nord!"—"I am a man of the north," one of these swelling fellows would exclaim, sticking his arms akimbo and ruffling by the South-westerners; whom he regarded with great contempt, as men softened by mild climates and the luxurious fare of bread and bacon, and whom he stigmatized with the inglorious name of pork eaters. The superiority assumed by these vainglorious swaggers was, in general, tacitly admitted. Indeed, some of them had acquired great notoriety for deeds of hardihood and courage; for the fur trade had its heroes, whose names resounded throughout the wilderness.

Such was Mackinaw at the time of which we are treating. It now, doubtless, presents a totally different aspect. The fur companies no longer assemble there; the navigation of the lakes is carried on by steamboats and various shipping, and the race of traders, and trappers,

and voyageurs, and Indian dandies, have vapoured out their brief hour and disappeared. Such changes does the lapse of a handful of years make in this ever changing country.

At this place Mr. Hunt remained for some time, to complete his assortment of Indian goods, and to increase his number of voyageurs, as well as to engage some of a more efficient character than those enlisted at Montreal.

And now commenced another game of jockeyship. There were able and efficient men in abundance at Mackinaw, but for several days not one presented himself. If offers were made to any, they were listened to with a shake of the head. Should any one seem inclined to enlist, there were officious idlers and busybodies, of that class who are ever ready to dissuade others from any enterprise in which they themselves have no concern. These would pull him by the sleeve, take him on one side, and murmur in his ear, or would suggest difficulties outright.

It was objected that the expedition would have to navigate unknown rivers, and pass

through howling wildernesses infested by savage tribes, who had already cut off the unfortunate voyageurs, that had ventured among them. That it was to climb the Rocky mountains and descend into desolate and famished regions, where the traveller was often obliged to subsist on grasshoppers and crickets, or to kill his own horse for food.

At length one man was hardy enough to engage, and he was used like a "stool pigeon," to decoy others; but several days elapsed before any more could be prevailed upon to join him. A few then came to terms. It was desirable to engage them for five years, but some refused to engage for more than three. Then they must have part of their pay in advance, which was readily granted. When they had pocketed the amount, and squandered it in regales or in outfits, they began to talk of pecuniary obligations at Mackinaw, which must be discharged before they would be free to depart; or engagements with other persons, which were only to be cancelled by a "reasonable consideration."

It was in vain to argue or remonstrate. The money advanced had already been sacked and spent, and must be lost and the recruits left behind, unless they could be freed from their debts and engagements. Accordingly, a fine was paid for one; a judgment for another; a tavern bill for a third; and almost all had to be bought off from some prior engagement either real or pretended.

Mr. Hunt groaned in spirit at the incessant and unreasonable demands of these worthies upon his purse; yet with all this outlay of funds, the number recruited was but scanty, and many of the most desirable still held themselves aloof, and were not to be caught by a golden bait. With these he tried another temptation. Among the recruits who had enlisted he distributed feathers and ostrich plumes. These they put in their hats, and thus figured about Mackinaw, assuming airs of vast importance, as "voyageurs in a new company, that was to eclipse the North-west." The effect was complete. A French Canadian is too vain and mercurial a being to withstand

the finery and ostentation of the feather. Numbers immediately pressed into the service. One must have an ostrich plume; another, a white feather with a red end; a third, a bunch of cocks' tails. Thus all paraded about, in vain-glorious style, more delighted with the feathers in their hats than with the money in their pockets; and considering themselves fully equal to the boastful "men of the north."

While thus recruiting the number of rank and file, Mr. Hunt was joined by a person whom he had invited, by letter, to engage as a partner in the expedition. This was Mr. Ramsay Crooks, a young man, a native of Scotland, who had served under the Northwest Company, and been engaged in trading expeditions upon his individual account, among the tribes of the Missouri. Mr. Hunt knew him personally, and had conceived a high and merited opinion of his judgment, enterprise, and integrity: he was rejoiced, therefore, when the latter consented to accompany him. Mr. Crooks, however, drew from experience a picture of the dangers to which

they would be subjected, and urged the importance of going with a considerable force. In ascending the upper Missouri they would have to pass through the country of the Sioux Indians, who had manifested repeated hostility to the white traders, and rendered their expeditions extremely perilous; firing upon them from the river banks as they passed beneath in their boats, and attacking them in their encampments. Mr. Crooks himself, when voyaging in company with another trader of the name of M'Lellan, had been interrupted by those marauders, and had considered himself fortunate in escaping down the river without loss of life or property, but with a total abandonment of his trading voyage.

Should they be fortunate enough to pass through the country of the Sioux without molestation, they would have another tribe still more savage and warlike beyond, and deadly foes of the white men. These were the Blackfeet Indians, who ranged over a wide extent of country which they would have to traverse.

Under all these circumstances, it was thought

advisable to augment the party considerably. It already exceeded the number of thirty, to which it had originally been limited ; but it was determined, on arriving at St. Louis, to increase it to the number of sixty.

These matters being arranged, they prepared to embark ; but the embarkation of a crew of Canadian voyageurs, on a distant expedition, is not so easy a matter as might be imagined ; especially of such a set of vainglorious fellows with money in both pockets, and cocks' tails in their hats. Like sailors, the Canadian voyageurs generally preface a long cruise with a carouse. They have their cronies, their brothers, their cousins, their wives, their sweethearts ; all to be entertained at their expense. They feast, they fiddle, they drink, they sing, they dance, they frolic and fight, until they are all as mad as so many drunken Indians. The publicans are all obedience to their commands, never hesitating to let them run up scores without limit, knowing that, when their own money is expended, the purses of their employers must answer for the bill, or the voyage must

be delayed. Neither was it possible, at that time, to remedy the matter at Mackinaw. In that amphibious community there was always a propensity to wrest the laws in favour of riotous or mutinous boatmen. It was necessary, also, to keep the recruits in good-humour, seeing the novelty and danger of the service into which they were entering, and the ease with which they might at any time escape it, by jumping into a canoe and going down the stream.

Such were the scenes that beset Mr. Hunt, and gave him a foretaste of the difficulties of his command. The little cabarets and sutlers' shops along the bay resounded with the scraping of fiddles, with snatches of old French songs, with Indian whoops and yelps; while every plumed and feathered vagabond had his troop of loving cousins and comrades at his heels. It was with the utmost difficulty they could be extricated from the clutches of the publicans, and the embraces of their pot companions, who followed them to the water's edge with many a hug, a kiss on each cheek, and a maudlin benediction in Canadian French.

It was about the 12th of August that they left Mackinaw, and pursued the usual route by Green bay, Fox and Wisconsin rivers, to Prairie du Chien, and thence down the Mississippi to St. Louis, where they landed on the 3d of September.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. LOUIS—ITS SITUATION—MOTLEY POPULATION—FRENCH CREOLE TRADERS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS—MISSOURI FUR COMPANY—MR. MANUEL LISA—MISSISSIPPI BOATMEN—VAGRANT INDIANS—KENTUCKY HUNTERS—OLD FRENCH MANSION—FIDDLING—BILLIARDS—MR. JOSEPH MILLER—HIS CHARACTER—RECRUITS—VOYAGE UP THE MISSOURI—DIFFICULTIES OF THE RIVER—MERITS OF CANADIAN VOYAGEURS—ARRIVAL AT THE NODOWA—MR. ROBERT M'LELLAN JOINS THE PARTY—JOHN DAY, A VIRGINIA HUNTER—DESCRIPTION OF HIM—MR. HUNT RETURNS TO ST. LOUIS.

ST. LOUIS, which is situated on the right bank of the Mississippi river, a few miles below the mouth of the Missouri, was, at that time, a frontier settlement, and the last fitting out place for the Indian trade of the south-west. It possessed a motley population, composed of the creole descendants of the original French colonists; the keen traders from the Atlantic states;

the backwoodmen of Kentucky and Tennessee; the Indians and half-breeds of the prairies; together with a singular aquatic race that had grown up from the navigation of the rivers—the “boatmen of the Mississippi;” who possessed habits, manners, and almost a language, peculiarly their own, and strongly technical. They, at that time, were extremely numerous, and conducted the chief navigation and commerce of the Ohio and the Mississippi, as the voyageurs did of the Canadian waters; but, like them, their consequence and characteristics are rapidly vanishing before the all-pervading intrusion of steamboats.

The old French houses engaged in the Indian trade had gathered round them a train of dependants, mongrel Indians, and mongrel Frenchmen, who had intermarried with Indians. These they employed in their various expeditions by land and water. Various individuals of other countries had, of late years, pushed the trade further into the interior, to the upper waters of the Missouri, and had swelled the number of these hangers on. Several of these

traders had, two or three years previously, formed themselves into a company, composed of twelve partners, with a capital of about forty thousand dollars, called the Missouri Fur Company; the object of which was, to establish posts along the upper part of that river, and monopolize the trade. The leading partner of this company was Mr. Manuel Lisa, a Spaniard by birth, and a man of bold and enterprising character, who had ascended the Missouri almost to its source, and made himself well acquainted and popular with several of its tribes. By his exertions, trading posts had been established, in 1808, in the Sioux country, and among the Aricara and Mandan tribes; and a principal one, under Mr. Henry, one of the partners, at the forks of the Missouri. This company had in its employ about two hundred and fifty men, partly American hunters, and partly creoles and Canadian voyageurs.

All these circumstances combined to produce a population at St. Louis even still more motley than that at Mackinaw. Here were to be seen about the river banks, the hectoring, extrava-

gant, bragging boatmen of the Mississippi, with the gay, grimacing, singing, good-humoured Canadian voyageurs. Vagrant Indians of various tribes, loitered about the streets. Now and then, a stark Kentucky hunter, in leathern hunting dress, with rifle on shoulder and knife in belt, strode along. Here and there were new brick houses and shops, just set up by bustling, driving, and eager men of traffic, from the Atlantic states; while, on the other hand, the old French mansions, with open casements, still retained the easy, indolent air of the original colonists; and now and then the scraping of a fiddle, a strain of an ancient French song, or the sound of billiard balls, showed that the happy Gallic turn for gaiety and amusement still lingered about the place.

Such was St. Louis at the time of Mr. Hunt's arrival there; and the appearance of a new fur company, with ample funds at its command, produced a strong sensation among the Indian traders of the place, and awakened keen jealousy and opposition on the part of

the Missouri Company. Mr. Hunt proceeded to strengthen himself against all competition. For this purpose he secured to the interests of the association another of those enterprising men, who had been engaged in individual traffic with the tribes of the Missouri. This was a Mr. Joseph Miller, a gentleman well educated and well informed, and of a respectable family of Baltimore. He had been an officer in the army of the United States, but had resigned in disgust, on being refused a furlough, and had taken to trapping beaver and trading among the Indians. He was easily induced by Mr. Hunt to join as a partner, and was considered by him, on account of his education and acquirements, and his experience in Indian trade, a valuable addition to the company.

Several additional men were likewise enlisted at St. Louis; some as boatmen, and others as hunters. These last were engaged, not merely to kill game for provisions, but also, and indeed chiefly, to trap beaver and other animals of rich furs, valuable in the trade. They enlisted on different terms. Some were to have a fixed

salary of three hundred dollars; others were to be fitted out and maintained at the expense of the company, and were to hunt and trap on shares.

As Mr. Hunt met with much opposition on the part of rival traders, especially the Missouri Fur Company, it took him some weeks to complete his preparations. The delays which he had previously experienced at Montreal, Mackinaw, and on the way, added to those at St. Louis, had thrown him much behind his original calculations, so that it would be impossible to effect his voyage up the Missouri in the present year. This river, flowing from high and cold latitudes, and through wide and open plains, exposed to chilling blasts, freezes early. The winter may be dated from the 1st of November; there was every prospect, therefore, that it would be closed with ice long before Mr. Hunt could reach its upper waters. To avoid, however, the expense of wintering at St. Louis, he determined to push up the river as far as possible, to some point above the settlements, where game was plenty, and where his

whole party could be subsisted by hunting, until the breaking up of the ice in the spring should permit them to resume their voyage.

Accordingly, on the 21st of October he took his departure from St. Louis. His party was distributed in three boats. One was the barge which he had brought from Mackinaw; another was of a larger size, such as was formerly used in navigating the Mohawk river, and known by the generic name of the Schenectady barge; the other was a large keel boat, at that time the grand conveyance on the Mississippi.

In this way they set out from St. Louis, in buoyant spirits, and soon arrived at the mouth of the Missouri. This vast river, three thousand miles in length, and which, with its tributary streams, drains such an immense extent of country, was as yet but casually and imperfectly navigated by the adventurous bark of the fur trader. A steamboat had never yet stemmed its turbulent current. Sails were but of casual assistance, for it required a strong wind to conquer the force of the stream. The main dependance was on bodily strength and manual

dexterity. The boats, in general, had to be propelled by oars and setting poles, or drawn by the hand, and by grappling hooks from one root or overhanging tree to another; or towed by the long cordelle, or towing line, where the shores were sufficiently clear of woods and thickets to permit the men to pass along the banks.

During this long and tedious progress the boat would be exposed to frequent danger from floating trees and great masses of drift wood, or to be empaled upon snags and sawyers; that is to say, sunken trees, presenting a jagged or pointed end above the surface of the water. As the channel of the river frequently shifted from side to side, according to the bends and sandbanks, the boat had, in the same way, to advance in a zigzag course. Often a part of the crew would have to leap into the water at the shallows, and wade along with the towing line, while their comrades on board toilsomely assisted with oar and setting pole. Sometimes the boat would seem to be retained motionless, as if spell bound, opposite some point round

which the current set with violence, and where the utmost labour scarce effected any visible progress.

On these occasions it was that the merits of the Canadian voyageurs came into full action. Patient of toil, not to be disheartened by impediments and disappointments, fertile in expedients, and versed in every mode of humouring and conquering the wayward current, they would ply every exertion, sometimes in the boat, sometimes on shore, sometimes in the water, however cold; always alert, always in good humour; and, should they at any time flag or grow weary, one of their popular boat songs, chanted by a veteran oarsman, and responded to in chorus, acted as a never-failing restorative.

By such assiduous and persevering labour they made their way about four hundred and fifty miles up the Missouri, by the 16th of November, to the mouth of the Nodowa. As this was a good hunting country, and as the season was rapidly advancing, they determined to establish their winter quarters at this place;

and, in fact, two days after they had come to a halt, the river closed just above their encampment.

The party had not been long at this place when they were joined by Mr. Robert M'Lellan, another trader of the Missouri; the same who had been associated with Mr. Crooks in the unfortunate expedition in which they had been intercepted by the Sioux Indians, and obliged to make a rapid retreat down the river.

M'Lellan was a remarkable man. He had been a partisan under General Wayne in his Indian wars, where he had distinguished himself by his fiery spirit and reckless daring, and marvellous stories were told of his exploits. His appearance answered to his character. His frame was meagre, but muscular; showing strength, activity, and iron firmness. His eyes were dark, deep set, and piercing. He was restless, fearless, but of impetuous and sometimes ungovernable temper. He had been invited by Mr. Hunt to enrol himself as a partner, and gladly consented; being pleased with the thoughts of passing, with a powerful

force, through the country of the Sioux, and perhaps having an opportunity of revenging himself upon that lawless tribe for their past offences.

Another recruit that joined the camp of Nodowa deserves equal mention. This was John Day, a hunter from the backwoods of Virginia, but who had been several years on the Missouri in the service of Mr. Crooks, and of other traders. He was about forty years of age, six feet two inches high, straight as an Indian; with an elastic step as if he trod on springs, and a handsome, open, manly countenance. It was his boast that, in his younger days, nothing could hurt or daunt him; but he had "lived too fast," and injured his constitution by his excesses. Still he was strong of hand, bold of heart, a prime woodman, and an almost unerring shot. He had the frank spirit of a Virginian, and the rough heroism of a pioneer of the west.

The party were now brought to a halt for several months. They were in a country abounding with deer and wild turkeys, so that there

was no stint of provisions, and every one appeared cheerful and contented. Mr. Hunt determined to avail himself of this interval to return to St. Louis and obtain a reinforcement. He wished to procure an interpreter, acquainted with the language of the Sioux; as, from all accounts, he apprehended difficulties in passing through the country of that nation. He felt the necessity, also, of having a greater number of hunters, not merely to keep up a supply of provisions throughout their long and arduous expedition, but also as a protection and defence in case of Indian hostilities. For such service the Canadian voyageurs were little to be depended upon, fighting not being a part of their profession. The proper kind of men were American hunters, experienced in savage life and savage warfare, and possessed of the true game spirit of the west.

Leaving, therefore, the encampment in charge of the other partners, Mr. Hunt set off on foot on the 1st of January, 1810, for St. Louis. He was accompanied by eight men as far as fort Osage, about one hundred and fifty miles below

Nodowa. Here he procured a couple of horses, and proceeded on the remainder of his journey with two men, sending the other six back to the encampment. He arrived at St. Louis on the 20th of January.

CHAPTER XV.

OPPOSITION OF THE MISSOURI FUR COMPANY—BLACKFEET INDIANS
—PIERRE DORION, A HALF-BREED INTERPRETER—OLD DORION
AND HIS HYBRID PROGENY—FAMILY QUARRELS—CROSS PUR-
POSES BETWEEN DORIAN AND LISA — RENEGADOES FROM NO-
DOWA—PERPLEXITIES OF A COMMANDER—MESSRS. BRADBURY
AND NUTTALL JOIN THE EXPEDITION — LEGAL EMBARRASS-
MENTS OF PIERRE DORION — DEPARTURE FROM ST. LOUIS —
CONJUGAL DISCIPLINE OF A HALF-BREED—ANNUAL SWELLING
OF THE RIVERS—DANIEL BOON, THE PATRIARCH OF KENTUCKY—
JOHN COLTER — HIS ADVENTURES AMONG THE INDIANS — RU-
MOURS OF DANGER AHEAD—PORT OSAGE—AN INDIAN WAR—FEAST
—TROUBLES IN THE DORION FAMILY—BUFFALOES AND TURKEY-
BUZZARDS.

ON this his second visit to St. Louis, Mr. Hunt was again impeded in his plans by the opposition of the Missouri Fur Company. The affairs of that company were, at this time, in a very dubious state. During the preceding year their principal establishment at the forks of the Missouri had been so much harassed by the

Blackfeet Indians, that its commander, Mr. Henry, one of the partners, had been compelled to abandon the post and cross the Rocky mountains, with the intention of fixing himself upon one of the upper branches of the Columbia. What had become of him and his party was unknown. The most intense anxiety was felt concerning them, and apprehensions that they might have been cut off by the savages. At the time of Mr. Hunt's arrival at St. Louis, the Missouri Company were fitting out an expedition to go in quest of Mr. Henry. It was to be conducted by Mr. Manuel Lisa, the enterprising partner already mentioned.

There being thus two expeditions on foot at the same moment, an unusual demand was occasioned for hunters and voyageurs, who accordingly profited by the circumstance, and stipulated for high terms. Mr. Hunt found a keen and subtle competitor in Lisa, and was obliged to secure his recruits by liberal advances of pay, and by other pecuniary indulgences.

The greatest difficulty was to procure the Sioux interpreter. There was but one man to

be met with at St. Louis who was fitted for the purpose, but to secure him would require much management. The individual in question was a half-breed, named Pierre Dorion; and, as he figures hereafter in this narrative, and is, withal, a striking specimen of the hybrid race on the frontier, we shall give a few particulars concerning him. Pierre was the son of Dorion, the French interpreter, who accompanied Messrs. Lewis and Clarke in their famous exploring expedition across the Rocky mountains. Old Dorion was one of those French creoles, descendants of the ancient Canadian stock, who abound on the western frontier, and amalgamate or cohabit with the savages. He had sojourned among various tribes, and perhaps left progeny among them all; but his regular, or habitual wife, was a Sioux squaw. By her he had a hopeful brood of half-breed sons, of whom Pierre was one. The domestic affairs of old Dorion were conducted on the true Indian plan. Father and sons would occasionally get drunk together, and then the cabin was a scene of ruffian brawl and fighting, in the course of

which the old Frenchman was apt to get soundly belaboured by his mongrel offspring. In a furious scuffle of the kind, one of the sons got the old man upon the ground, and was upon the point of scalping him. "Hold! my son," cried the old fellow, in imploring accents, "you are too brave, too *honourable* to scalp your father!" This last appeal touched the French side of the half-breed's heart, so he suffered the old man to wear his scalp unharmed.

Of this hopeful stock was Pierre Dorion, the man whom it was now the desire of Mr. Hunt to engage as an interpreter. He had been employed in that capacity by the Missouri Fur Company during the preceding year, and had conducted their traders in safety through the different tribes of the Sioux. He had proved himself faithful and serviceable while sober; but the love of liquor, in which he had been nurtured and brought up, would occasionally break out, and with it the savage side of his character.

It was this love of liquor which had embroiled him with the Missouri Company. While in

their service at fort Mandan, on the frontier, he had been seized with a whiskey mania; and, as the beverage was only to be procured at the company's store, it had been charged in his account at the rate of ten dollars a quart. This item had ever remained unsettled, and a matter of furious dispute, the mere mention of which was sufficient to put him in a passion.

The moment it was discovered by Mr. Lisa that Pierre Dorion was in treaty with the new and rival association, he endeavoured, by threats as well as promises, to prevent his engaging in their service. His promises might, perhaps, have prevailed; but his threats, which related to the whiskey debt, only served to drive Pierre into the opposite ranks. Still, he took advantage of this competition for his services to stand out with Mr. Hunt on the most advantageous terms, and, after a negotiation of nearly two weeks, capitulated to serve in the expedition, as hunter and interpreter, at the rate of three hundred dollars a year, two hundred of which were to be paid in advance.

When Mr. Hunt had got every thing ready

for leaving St. Louis, new difficulties arose. Five of the American hunters, from the encampment at Nodowa, suddenly made their appearance. They alleged that they had been ill treated by the partners at the encampment, and had come off clandestinely, in consequence of a dispute. It was useless at the present moment, and under present circumstances, to attempt any compulsory measures with these deserters. Two of them Mr. Hunt prevailed upon, by mild means, to return with him. The rest refused; nay, what was worse, they spread such reports of the hardships and dangers to be apprehended in the course of the expedition, that they struck a panic into those hunters who had recently engaged at St. Louis, and, when the hour of departure arrived, all but one refused to embark. It was in vain to plead or remonstrate; they shouldered their rifles and turned their back upon the expedition, and Mr. Hunt was fain to put off from shore with the single hunter and a number of voyageurs whom he had engaged. Even Pierre Dorion, at the last moment, refused to enter the boat until Mr. Hunt consented to

take his squaw and two children on board also. But the tissue of perplexities, on account of this worthy individual, did not end here.

Among the various persons who were about to proceed up the Missouri with Mr. Hunt, were two scientific gentlemen: one Mr. John Bradbury, a man of mature age, but great enterprise and personal activity, who had been sent out by the Linnean Society of Liverpool, to make a collection of American plants; the other a Mr. Nuttall, likewise an Englishman, younger in years, who has since made himself known as the author of "Travels in Arkansas," and a work on the "Genera of American Plants." Mr. Hunt had offered them the protection and facilities of his party, in their scientific researches up the Missouri. As they were not ready to depart at the moment of embarkation, they put their trunks on board of the boat, but remained at St. Louis until the next day, for the arrival of the post, intending to join the expedition at St. Charles, a short distance above the mouth of the Missouri.

The same evening, however, they learned that

a writ had been issued against Pierre Dorion for his whiskey debt, by Mr. Lisa, as agent of the Missouri Company, and that it was the intention to entrap the mongrel linguist on his arrival at St. Charles. Upon hearing this, Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Nuttall set off a little after midnight, by land, got ahead of the boat as it was ascending the Missouri, before its arrival at St. Charles, and gave Pierre Dorion warning of the legal toil prepared to ensnare him. The knowing Pierre immediately landed and took to the woods, followed by his squaw laden with their papooses, and a large bundle containing their most precious effects; promising to rejoin the party some distance above St. Charles. There seemed little dependance to be placed upon the promises of a loose adventurer of the kind, who was at the very time playing an evasive game with his former employers; who had already received two-thirds of his year's pay, and had his rifle on his shoulder, his family and worldly fortune at his heels, and the wild woods before him. There was no alternative, however, and it was hoped his pique against his

old employers would render him faithful to his new ones.

The party reached St. Charles in the afternoon, but the harpies of the law looked in vain for their expected prey. The boats resumed their course on the following morning, and had not proceeded far when Pierre Dorion made his appearance on the shore. He was gladly taken on board, but he came without his squaw. They had quarrelled in the night; Pierre had administered the Indian discipline of the cudgel, whereupon she had taken to the woods, with their children and all their worldly goods. Pierre evidently was deeply grieved and disconcerted at the loss of his wife and his knapsack, wherefore Mr. Hunt despatched one of the Canadian voyageurs in search of the fugitive; and the whole party, after proceeding a few miles further, encamped on an island to await his return. The Canadian rejoined the party, but without the squaw; and Pierre Dorion passed a solitary and anxious night, bitterly regretting his indiscretion in having exercised his conjugal authority so near home. Before daybreak,

however, a well known voice reached his ears from the opposite shore. It was his repentant spouse, who had been wandering the woods all night in quest of the party, and had at length descried it by its fires. A boat was despatched for her, the interesting family was once more united, and Mr. Hunt now flattered himself that his perplexities with Pierre Dorion were at an end.

Bad weather, very heavy rains, and an unusually early rise in the Missouri, rendered the ascent of the river toilsome, slow, and dangerous. The rise of the Missouri does not generally take place until the month of May or June: the present swelling of the river must have been caused by a freshet in some of its more southern branches. It could not have been the great annual flood, as the higher branches must still have been ice-bound.

And here we cannot but pause, to notice the admirable arrangement of nature, by which the annual swellings of the various great rivers which empty themselves into the Mississippi, have been made to precede each other at considerable

intervals. Thus, the flood of the Red river precedes that of the Arkansas by a month. The Arkansas, also, rising in a much more southern latitude than the Missouri, takes the lead of it in its annual excess, and its superabundant waters are disgorged and disposed of long before the breaking up of the icy barriers of the north; otherwise, did all these mighty streams rise simultaneously, and discharge their vernal floods into the Mississippi, an inundation would be the consequence, that would submerge and devastate all the lower country.

On the afternoon of the third day, January 17th, the boats touched at Charette, one of the old villages founded by the original French colonists. Here they met with Daniel Boon, the renowned patriarch of Kentucky, who had kept in the advance of civilization, and on the borders of the wilderness, still leading a hunter's life, though now in his eighty-fifth year. He had but recently returned from a hunting and trapping expedition, and had brought nearly sixty beaver skins as trophies of his skill. The old man was still erect in form, strong in limb,

and unflinching in spirit; and as he stood on the river bank, watching the departure of an expedition destined to traverse the wilderness to the very shores of the Pacific, very probably felt a throb of his old pioneer spirit, impelling him to shoulder his rifle and join the adventurous band. Boon flourished several years after this meeting, in a vigorous old age, the Nestor of hunters and backwoodmen; and died, full of sylvan honour and renown, in 1818, in his ninety-second year.

The next morning early, as the party were yet encamped at the mouth of a small stream, they were visited by another of these heroes of the wilderness, one John Colter, who had accompanied Lewis and Clarke in their memorable expedition. He had recently made one of those vast internal voyages so characteristic of this fearless class of men, and of the immense regions over which they hold their lonely wanderings; having come from the head waters of the Missouri to St. Louis in a small canoe. This distance of three thousand miles he had accomplished in thirty days. Colter kept with

the party all the morning. He had many particulars to give them concerning the Blackfeet Indians, a restless and predatory tribe, who had conceived an implacable hostility to the white men, in consequence of one of their warriors having been killed by Captain Lewis, while attempting to steal horses. Through the country infested by these savages the expedition would have to proceed, and Colter was urgent in reiterating the precautions that ought to be observed respecting them. He had himself experienced their vindictive cruelty, and his story deserves particular citation, as showing the hairbreadth adventures to which these solitary rovers of the wilderness are exposed.

Colter, with the hardihood of a regular trapper, had cast himself loose from the party of Lewis and Clarke in the very heart of the wilderness, and had remained to trap beaver alone on the head waters of the Missouri. Here he fell in with another lonely trapper, like himself, named Potts, and they agreed to keep together. They were in the very region of the terrible Blackfeet, at that time thirsting to

revenge the death of their companion, and knew that they had to expect no mercy at their hands. They were obliged to keep concealed all day in the woody margins of the rivers, setting their traps after nightfall, and taking them up before daybreak. It was running a fearful risk for the sake of a few beaver skins; but such is the life of the trapper.

They were on a branch of the Missouri called Jefferson's Fork, and had set their traps at night, about six miles up a small river that emptied itself into the fork. Early in the morning they ascended the river in a canoe, to examine the traps. The banks on each side were high and perpendicular, and cast a shade over the stream. As they were softly paddling along, they heard the trampling of many feet upon the banks. Colter immediately gave the alarm of "Indians!" and was for instant retreat. Potts scoffed at him for being frightened by the trampling of a herd of buffaloes. Colter checked his uneasiness and paddled forward. They had not gone much further when frightful whoops and yells burst forth

from each side of the river, and several hundred Indians appeared on either bank. Signs were made to the unfortunate trappers to come on shore. They were obliged to comply. Before they could get out of their canoe, a savage seized the rifle belonging to Potts. Colter sprang on shore, wrested the weapon from the hands of the Indian, and restored it to his companion, who was still in the canoe, and immediately pushed into the stream. There was the sharp twang of a bow, and Potts cried out that he was wounded. Colter urged him to come on shore and submit, as his only chance for life; but the other knew there was no prospect of mercy, and determined to die game. Leveling his rifle, he shot one of the savages dead on the spot. The next moment he fell himself, pierced with innumerable arrows.

The vengeance of the savages now turned upon Colter. He was stripped naked, and, having some knowledge of the Blackfoot language, overheard a consultation as to the mode of despatching him, so as to derive the greatest amusement from his death. Some were for

setting him up as a mark, and having a trial of skill at his expense. The chief, however, was for nobler sport. He seized Colter by the shoulder, and demanded if he could run fast. The unfortunate trapper was too well acquainted with Indian customs not to comprehend the drift of the question. He knew he was to run for his life, to furnish a kind of human hunt to his persecutors. Though in reality he was noted among his brother hunters for swiftness of foot, he assured the chief that he was a very bad runner. His stratagem gained him some vantage ground. He was led by the chief into the prairie, about four hundred yards from the main body of savages, and then turned loose, to save himself if he could. A tremendous yell let him know that the whole pack of bloodhounds were off in full cry. Colter flew, rather than ran; he was astonished at his own speed; but he had six miles of prairie to traverse before he should reach the Jefferson fork of the Missouri; how could he hope to hold out such a distance with the fearful odds of several hundred to one against him! The

plain too, abounded with the prickly pear, which wounded his naked feet. Still he fled on, dreading each moment to hear the twang of a bow, and to feel an arrow quivering at his heart. He did not even dare to look round, lest he should lose an inch of that distance on which his life depended. He had run nearly half way across the plain when the sound of pursuit grew somewhat fainter, and he ventured to turn his head. The main body of his pursuers were a considerable distance behind; several of the faster runners were scattered in the advance; while a swift-footed warrior, armed with a spear, was not more than a hundred yards behind him.

Inspired with new hope, Colter redoubled his exertions, but strained himself to such a degree, that the blood gushed from his mouth and nostrils, and streamed down his breast. He arrived within a mile of the river. The sound of footsteps gathered upon him. A glance behind showed his pursuer within twenty yards, and preparing to launch his spear. Stopping short, he turned round and spread out his arms. The

savage, confounded by this sudden action, attempted to stop and to hurl his spear, but fell in the very act. His spear stuck in the ground, and the shaft broke in his hand. Colter plucked up the pointed part, pinned the savage to the earth, and continued his flight. The Indians, as they arrived at their slaughtered companion, stopped to howl over him. Colter made the most of this precious delay, gained the skirt of cotton-wood bordering the river, dashed through it, and plunged into the stream. He swam to a neighbouring island, against the upper end of which the driftwood had lodged in such quantities as to form a natural raft; under this he dived, and swam below water until he succeeded in getting a breathing place between the floating trunks of trees, whose branches and bushes formed a covert several feet above the level of the water. He had scarcely drawn breath after all his toils, when he heard his pursuers on the river bank, whooping and yelling like so many fiends. They plunged in the river, and swam to the raft. The heart of Colter almost died within him as he saw them, through the chinks

of his concealment, passing and repassing, and seeking for him in all directions. They at length gave up the search, and he began to rejoice in his escape, when the idea presented itself that they might set the raft on fire. Here was a new source of horrible apprehension, in which he remained until nightfall. Fortunately, the idea did not suggest itself to the Indians. As soon as it was dark, finding by the silence around that his pursuers had departed, Colter dived again, and came up beyond the raft. He then swam silently down the river for a considerable distance, when he landed, and kept on all night, to get as far off as possible from this dangerous neighbourhood.

By daybreak he had gained sufficient distance to relieve him from the terrors of his savage foes; but now new sources of inquietude presented themselves. He was naked and alone, in the midst of an unbounded wilderness; his only chance was to reach a trading post of the Missouri company, situated on a branch of the Yellowstone river. Even should he elude his pursuers, days must elapse before he could reach

this post, during which he must traverse immense prairies destitute of shade, his naked body exposed to the burning heat of the sun by day, and the dews and chills of the night season : and his feet lacerated by the thorns of the prickly pear. Though he might see game in abundance around him, he had no means of killing any for his sustenance, and must depend for food upon the roots of the earth. In defiance of these difficulties he pushed resolutely forward, guiding himself in his trackless course by those signs and indications known only to Indians and backwoodmen ; and after braving dangers and hardships enough to break down any spirit but that of a western pioneer, arrived safe at the solitary post in question.*

Such is a sample of the rugged experience which Colter had to relate of savage life ; yet, with all these perils and terrors fresh in his recollection, he could not see the present band on their way to those regions of danger and adventure, without feeling a vehement impulse to join them. A western trapper is like a sailor ;

* Bradbury. Travels in America, p. 17.

past hazards only stimulate him to further risks. The vast prairie is to the one what the ocean is to the other, a boundless field of enterprise and exploit. However he may have suffered in his last cruise, he is always ready to join a new expedition; and the more adventurous its nature, the more attractive is it to his vagrant spirit.

Nothing seems to have kept Colter from continuing with the party to the shores of the Pacific, but the circumstance of his having recently married. All the morning he kept with them, balancing in his mind the charms of his bride against those of the Rocky mountains; the former, however, prevailed, and after a march of several miles, he took a reluctant leave of the travellers, and turned his face homeward.

Continuing their progress up the Missouri, the party encamped on the evening of the 21st of March, in the neighbourhood of a little frontier village of French creoles. Here Pierre Dorion met with some of his old comrades, with whom he had a long gossip, and returned

to the camp with rumours of bloody feuds between the Osages and the Ioways, or Aya-ways, Potowatomies, Sioux, and Sawkees. Blood had already been shed, and scalps been taken. A war party, three hundred strong, were prowling in the neighbourhood; others might be met with higher up the river; it behoved the travellers, therefore, to be upon their guard against robbery or surprise, for an Indian war party on the march is prone to acts of outrage.

In consequence of this report, which was subsequently confirmed by further intelligence, a guard was kept up at night round the encampment, and they all slept on their arms. As they were sixteen in number, and well supplied with weapons and ammunition, they trusted to be able to give any marauding party a warm reception. Nothing occurred, however, to molest them on their voyage, and on the 8th of April they came in sight of fort Osage. On their approach the flag was hoisted on the fort, and they saluted it by a discharge of fire-arms. Within a short distance of the fort was an

Osage village, the inhabitants of which, men, women, and children, thronged down to the water side to witness their landing. One of the first persons they met on the river bank was Mr. Crooks, who had come down in a boat with nine men, from the winter encampment at Nodowa, to meet them.

They remained at fort Osage a part of three days, during which they were hospitably entertained at the garrison by Lieutenant Brownson, who held a temporary command. They were regaled also with a war-feast at the village; the Osage warriors having returned from a successful foray against the Ioways, in which they had taken seven scalps. These were paraded on poles about the village, followed by the warriors decked out in all their savage ornaments, and hideously painted as if for battle.

By the Osage warriors, Mr. Hunt and his companions were again warned to be on their guard in ascending the river, as the Sioux tribe meant to lay in wait and attack them.

On the 10th of April they again embarked, their party being now augmented to twenty-

six, by the addition of Mr. Crooks and his boat's crew. They had not proceeded far, however, when there was a great outcry from one of the boats; it was occasioned by a little domestic discipline in the Dorion family. The squaw of the worthy interpreter, it appeared, had been so delighted with the scalp-dance, and other festivities of the Osage village, that she had taken a strong inclination to remain there. This had been as strongly opposed by her liege lord, who had compelled her to embark. The good dame had remained sulky ever since; whereupon Pierre, seeing no other mode of exorcising the evil spirit out of her, and being perhaps a little inspired by whiskey, had resorted to the Indian remedy of the cudgel, and, before his neighbours could interfere, had belaboured her so soundly, that there is no record of her having shown any refractory symptoms throughout the remainder of the expedition.

For a week they continued their voyage, exposed to almost incessant rains. The bodies of drowned buffaloes floated past them in vast

numbers; many had drifted upon the shore, or against the upper ends of the rafts and islands. These had attracted great flights of turkey-buzzards; some were banqueting on the carcasses, others were soaring far aloft in the sky, and others were perched on the trees, with their backs to the sun, and their wings stretched out to dry, like so many vessels in harbour, spreading their sails after a shower.

The turkey-buzzard (*vultur aura*, or golden vulture), when on the wing, is one of the most specious and imposing of birds. Its flight in the upper regions of the air is really sublime, extending its immense wings, and wheeling slowly and majestically to and fro, seemingly without exerting a muscle or fluttering a feather, but moving by mere volition, and sailing on the bosom of the air, as a ship upon the ocean. Usurping the empyreal realm of the eagle, he assumes for a time the port and dignity of that majestic bird, and often is mistaken for him by ignorant crawlers upon earth. It is only when he descends from the clouds to pounce upon carrion that he betrays his low propensities,

and reveals his caitiff character. Near at hand he is a disgusting bird, ragged in plumage, base in aspect, and of loathsome odour.

On the 17th of April Mr. Hunt arrived with his party at the station near the Nodowa river, where the main body had been quartered during the winter.

CHAPTER XVI.

RETURN OF SPRING—APPEARANCE OF SNAKES—GREAT FLIGHTS OF WILD PIGEONS—RENEWAL OF THE VOYAGE—NIGHT ENCAMPMENTS—PLATTE RIVER—CEREMONIALS ON PASSING IT—SIGNS OF INDIAN WAR PARTIES—MAGNIFICENT PROSPECT AT PAPILLION CREEK—DESERTION OF TWO HUNTERS—AN IRRUPTION INTO THE CAMP OF INDIAN DESPERADOES—VILLAGE OF THE OMAHAS—ANECDOTES OF THE TRIBE—FEUDAL WARS OF THE INDIANS—STORY OF BLACKBIRD, THE FAMOUS OMAHA CHIEF.

THE weather continued rainy and ungenial for some days after Mr. Hunt's return to Nodowa; yet spring was rapidly advancing, and vegetation was putting forth with all its early freshness and beauty. The snakes began to recover from their torpor and crawl forth into day, and the neighbourhood of the wintering house seems to be much infested with them. Mr. Bradbury, in the course of his botanical

researches, found a surprising number in a half torpid state, under flat stones upon the banks which overhung the cantonment, and narrowly escaped being struck by a rattlesnake, which darted at him from a cleft in the rock, but fortunately gave him warning by its rattle.

The pigeons too were filling the woods in vast migratory flocks. It is almost incredible to describe the prodigious flights of these birds in the western wildernesses. They appear absolutely in clouds, and move with astonishing velocity, their wings making a whistling sound as they fly. The rapid evolutions of these flocks, wheeling and shifting suddenly as if with one mind and one impulse; the flashing changes of colour they present, as their backs, their breasts, or the under part of their wings are turned to the spectator, are singularly pleasing. When they alight, if on the ground, they cover whole acres at a time; if upon trees, the branches often break beneath their weight. If suddenly startled while feeding in the midst of a forest, the noise they make in getting on the

wing is like the roar of a cataract or the sound of distant thunder.

A flight of this kind, like an Egyptian flight of locusts, devours every thing that serves for its food as it passes along. So great were the numbers in the vicinity of the camp that Mr. Bradbury, in the course of a morning's excursion, shot nearly three hundred with a fowling-piece. He gives a curious, though apparently a faithful, account of the kind of discipline observed in these immense flocks, so that each may have a chance of picking up food. As the front ranks must meet with the greatest abundance, and the rear ranks must have scanty pickings, the instant a rank finds itself the hindmost, it rises in the air, flies over the whole flock, and takes its place in the advance. The next rank follows in its course, and thus the last is continually becoming first, and all by turns have a front place at the banquet.

The rains having at length subsided, Mr. Hunt broke up the encampment and resumed his course up the Missouri.

The party now consisted of nearly sixty persons: of whom five were partners: one, John Reed, was a clerk; forty were Canadian "voyageurs," or "*engagés*," and there were several hunters. They embarked in four boats, one of which was of a large size, mounting a swivel and two howitzers. All were furnished with masts and sails, to be used when the wind was sufficiently favourable and strong to overpower the current of the river. Such was the case for the first four or five days, when they were wafted steadily up the stream by a strong southeaster.

Their encampments at night were often pleasant and picturesque: on some beautiful bank, beneath spreading trees, which afforded them shelter and fuel. The tents were pitched, the fires made, and the meals prepared by the voyageurs, and many a story was told and joke passed, and song sung, round the evening fire. All, however, were asleep at an early hour. Some under the tents, others wrapped in blankets before the fire, or beneath the trees; and some few in the boats and canoes.

On the 28th, they breakfasted on one of the islands which lie at the mouth of the Nebraska or Platte river; the largest tributary of the Missouri, and about six hundred miles above its confluence with the Mississippi. This broad but shallow stream flows for an immense distance through a wide and verdant valley, scooped out of boundless prairies. It draws its main supplies, by several forks or branches, from the Rocky mountains. The mouth of this river is established as the dividing point between the upper and lower Missouri; and the earlier voyagers, in their toilsome ascent, before the introduction of steam-boats, considered one half of their labours accomplished when they reached this place. The passing of the mouth of the Nebraska, therefore, was equivalent among boatmen to the crossing of the line among sailors, and was celebrated with like ceremonials of a rough and waggish nature, practised upon the uninitiated; among which was the old nautical joke of shaving. The river deities, however, like those of the sea, were to be propitiated by a bribe, and the infliction of

these rude honours to be parried by a treat to the adepts.

At the mouth of the Nebraska new signs were met with of war parties which had recently been in the vicinity. There was the frame of a skin canoe, in which the warriors had traversed the river. At night also the lurid reflection of immense fires hung in the sky, showing the conflagration of great tracts of the prairies. Such fires not being made by hunters so late in the season, it was supposed they were caused by some wandering war parties. These often take the precaution to set the prairies on fire behind them to conceal their traces from their enemies. This is chiefly done when the party has been unsuccessful and is on the retreat, and apprehensive of pursuit. At such time it is not safe even for friends to fall in with them, as they are apt to be in savage humour, and disposed to vent their spleen in capricious outrage. These signs, therefore, of a band of marauders on the prowl, called for some degree of vigilance on the part of the travellers.

After passing the Nebraska, the party halted

for part of two days on the bank of the river, a little above Papillion creek, to supply themselves with a stock of oars and poles from the tough wood of the ash, which is not met with higher up the Missouri. While the voyageurs were thus occupied, the naturalists rambled over the adjacent country to collect plants. From the summit of a range of bluffs on the opposite side of the river above two hundred and fifty feet high, they had one of those vast and magnificent prospects which sometimes unfold themselves in those boundless regions. Below them was the valley of the Missouri, about seven miles in breadth, clad in the fresh verdure of spring; enamelled with flowers and interspersed with clumps and groves of noble trees, between which the mighty river poured its turbulent and turbid stream. The interior of the country presented a singular scene; the immense waste being broken up by innumerable green hills, not above eighty feet in height, but extremely steep, and acutely pointed at their summits. A long line of bluffs extended for upwards of thirty miles, parallel to the Missouri,

with a shallow lake stretching along their base, which had evidently once formed a bed of the river. The surface of this lake was covered with aquatic plants, on the broad leaves of which numbers of water snakes, drawn forth by the genial warmth of spring, were basking in the sunshine.

On the 2d of May, at the usual hour of embarking, the camp was thrown into some confusion by two of the hunters, named Harrington, expressing their intention to abandon the expedition and return home. One of these had joined the party in the preceding autumn, having been hunting for two years on the Missouri : the other had engaged at St. Louis, in the following March, and had come up from thence with Mr. Hunt. He now declared that he had enlisted merely for the purpose of following his brother and persuading him to return ; having been enjoined to do so by his mother, whose anxiety had been awakened by the idea of his going on such a wild and distant expedition.

The loss of two stark hunters and prime rifle-

men was a serious affair to the party, for they were approaching the region where they might expect hostilities from the Sioux ; indeed, throughout the whole of their perilous journey, the services of such men would be all important, for little reliance was to be placed upon the valour of the Canadians in case of attack. Mr. Hunt endeavoured by arguments, expostulations, and entreaties, to shake the determination of the two brothers. He represented to them that they were between six and seven hundred miles above the mouth of the Missouri ; that they would have four hundred miles to go before they could reach the habitation of a white man, throughout which they would be exposed to all kinds of risks ; since he declared, if they persisted in abandoning him and breaking their faith, he would not furnish them with a single round of ammunition. All was in vain ; they obstinately persisted in their resolution ; whereupon, Mr. Hunt, partly incited by indignation, partly by the policy of deterring others from desertion, put his threat in execution, and left

them to find their way back to the settlements without, as he supposed, a single bullet or a charge of powder.

The boats now continued their slow and toilsome course for several days, against the current of the river. The late signs of roaming war parties caused a vigilant watch to be kept up at night when the crews encamped on shore; nor was this vigilance superfluous; for on the night of the 7th instant, there was a wild and fearful yell, and eleven Sioux warriors, stark naked, with tomahawks in their hands, rushed into the camp. They were instantly surrounded and seized, whereupon their leader called out to his followers to desist from any violence, and pretended to be perfectly pacific in his intentions. It proved, however, that they were a part of the war party, the skeleton of whose canoe had been seen at the mouth of the river Platte, and the reflection of whose fires had been descried in the air. They had been disappointed or defeated in their foray, and in their rage and mortification these eleven warriors had "devoted their clothes to the medicine." This is a des-

perate act of Indian braves when foiled in war, and in dread of scoffs and sneers. In such case they sometimes throw off their clothes and ornaments, devote themselves to the Great Spirit, and attempt some reckless exploit with which to cover their disgrace. Woe to any defenceless party of white men that may then fall in their way!

Such was the explanation given by Pierre Dorion, the half-breed interpreter, of this wild intrusion into the camp; and the party were so exasperated when apprized of the sanguinary intentions of the prisoners, that they were for shooting them on the spot. Mr. Hunt, however, exerted his usual moderation and humanity, and ordered that they should be conveyed across the river in one of the boats, threatening them, however, with certain death, if again caught in any hostile act.

On the 10th of May the party arrived at the Omaha (pronounced Omawhaw) village, about eight hundred and thirty miles above the mouth of the Missouri, and encamped in its neighbourhood. The village was situated under a hill on

the bank of the river, and consisted of about eighty lodges. These were of a circular and conical form, and about sixteen feet in diameter ; being mere tents of dressed buffalo skins, sewed together and stretched on long poles, inclined towards each other so as to cross at about half their height. Thus the naked tops of the poles diverge in such a manner that, if they were covered with skins like the lower ends, the tent would be shaped like an hour glass, and present the appearance of one cone inverted on the apex of another.

The forms of Indian lodges are worthy of attention, each tribe having a different mode of shaping and arranging them, so that it is easy to tell on seeing a lodge or an encampment at a distance, to what tribe the inhabitants belong. The exterior of the Omaha lodges have often a gay and fanciful appearance, being painted with undulating bands of red or yellow, or decorated with rude figures of horses, deer, and buffaloes, and with human faces, painted like full moons, four and five feet broad.

The Omahas were once one of the numerous and

powerful tribes of the prairies, vying in warlike might and prowess with the Sioux, the Pawnees, the Sauks, the Konzas, and the Iatans. Their wars with the Sioux, however, had thinned their ranks, and the smallpox in 1802 had swept off two-thirds of their number. At the time of Mr. Hunt's visit they still boasted about two hundred warriors and hunters, but they are now fast melting away, and, before long, will be numbered among those extinguished nations of the west that exist but in tradition.

In his correspondence with Mr. Astor, from this point of his journey, Mr. Hunt gives a sad account of the Indian tribes bordering on the river. They were in continual war with each other, and their wars were of the most harassing kind; consisting, not merely of main conflicts and expeditions of moment, involving the sackings, burnings, and massacres of towns and villages, but of individual acts of treachery, murder, and cold-blooded cruelty; or of vaunting and foolhardy exploits of single warriors, either to avenge some personal wrong, or gain the vainglorious trophy of a scalp. The lonely

hunter, the wandering wayfarer, the poor squaw cutting wood or gathering corn, was liable to be surprised and slaughtered. In this way tribes were either swept away at once, or gradually thinned out, and savage life was surrounded with constant horrors and alarms. That the race of red men should diminish from year to year, and so few should survive of the numerous nations which evidently once peopled the vast regions of the west, is nothing surprising; it is rather matter of surprise that so many should survive; for the existence of a savage in these parts seems little better than a prolonged and all-besetting death. It is, in fact, a caricature of the boasted romance of feudal times; chivalry in its native and uncultured state, and knight-errantry run wild.

In their more prosperous days, the Omahas looked upon themselves as the most powerful and perfect of human beings, and considered all created things as made for their peculiar use and benefit. It is this tribe of whose chief, the famous Wash-ing-guh-sah-ba, or Blackbird, such savage and romantic stories

are told. He had died about ten years previous to the arrival of Mr. Hunt's party, but his name was still remembered with awe by his people. He was one of the first among the Indian chiefs on the Missouri to deal with the white traders, and showed great sagacity in levying his royal dues. When a trader arrived in his village, he caused all his goods to be brought into his lodge and opened. From these he selected whatever suited his sovereign pleasure ; blankets, tobacco, whiskey, powder, ball, beads, and red paint ; and laid the articles on one side, without deigning to give any compensation. Then calling to him his herald or crier, he would order him to mount on top of the lodge and summon all the tribe to bring in their peltries, and trade with the white man. The lodge would soon be crowded with Indians bringing bear, beaver, otter, and other skins. No one was allowed to dispute the prices fixed by the white trader upon his articles ; who took care to indemnify himself five times over for the goods set apart by the chief. In this way the Blackbird enriched

himself, and enriched the white men, and became exceedingly popular among the traders of the Missouri. His people, however, were not equally satisfied by a regulation of trade which worked so manifestly against them, and began to show signs of discontent. Upon this a crafty and unprincipled trader revealed a secret to the Blackbird, by which he might acquire unbounded sway over his ignorant and superstitious subjects. He instructed him in the poisonous qualities of arsenic, and furnished him with an ample supply of that baneful drug. From this time the Blackbird seemed endowed with supernatural powers, to possess the gift of prophecy, and to hold the disposal of life and death within his hands. Woe to any one who questioned his authority or dared to dispute his commands! The Blackbird prophesied his death within a certain time, and he had the secret means of verifying his prophecy. Within the fated period the offender was smitten with strange and sudden disease, and perished from the face of the earth. Every one stood aghast at these multiplied examples of his superhuman

might, and dreaded to displease so omnipotent and vindictive a being; and the Blackbird enjoyed a wide and undisputed sway.

It was not, however, by terror alone that he ruled his people; he was a warrior of the first order, and his exploits in arms were the theme of young and old. His career had begun by hardships, having been taken prisoner by the Sioux, in early youth. Under his command, the Omahas obtained great character for military prowess, nor did he permit an insult or injury to one of his tribe to pass unrevenge. The Pawnee republicans had inflicted a gross indignity on a favourite and distinguished Omaha brave. The Blackbird assembled his warriors, led them against the Pawnee town, attacked it with irresistible fury, slaughtered a great number of its inhabitants, and burnt it to the ground. He waged fierce and bloody war against the Ottoes for many years, until peace was effected between them by the mediation of the whites. Fearless in battle, and fond of signalizing himself, he dazzled his followers by his daring acts. In attacking a

Kanza village, he rode singly round it, loading and discharging his rifle at the inhabitants as he galloped past them. He kept up in war the same idea of mysterious and supernatural power. At one time, when pursuing a war party by their tracks across the prairies, he repeatedly discharged his rifle into the prints made by their feet and by the hoofs of their horses, assuring his followers that he would thereby cripple the fugitives, so that they would easily be overtaken. He in fact did overtake them, and destroyed them almost to a man; and his victory was considered miraculous, both by friend and foe. By these and similar exploits, he made himself the pride and boast of his people, and became popular among them, notwithstanding his death-denouncing fiat.

With all his savage and terrific qualities, he was sensible of the power of female beauty, and capable of love. A war party of the Poncas had made a foray into the lands of the Omahas, and carried off a number of women and horses. The Blackbird was roused

to fury, and took the field with all his braves, swearing to "eat up the Ponca nation,"—the Indian threat of exterminating war. The Poncas, sorely pressed, took refuge behind a rude bulwark of earth; but the Blackbird kept up so galling a fire, that he seemed likely to execute his menace. In their extremity they sent forth a herald, bearing the calumet or pipe of peace, but he was shot down by order of the Blackbird. Another herald was sent forth in similar guise, but he shared a like fate. The Ponca chief then, as a last hope, arrayed his beautiful daughter in her finest ornaments, and sent her forth with a calumet, to sue for peace. The charms of the Indian maid touched the stern heart of the Blackbird; he accepted the pipe at her hand, smoked it, and from that time a peace took place between the Poncas and the Omahas.

This beautiful damsel, in all probability, was the favourite wife whose fate makes so tragic an incident in the story of the Blackbird. Her youth and beauty had gained an absolute sway over his rugged heart, so that he distinguished

her above all his other wives. The habitual gratification of his vindictive impulses, however, had taken away from him all mastery over his passions, and rendered him liable to the most furious transports of rage. In one of these his beautiful wife had the misfortune to offend him, when suddenly drawing his knife, he laid her dead at his feet with a single blow.

In an instant his frenzy was at an end. He gazed for a time in mute bewilderment upon his victim; then drawing his buffalo robe over his head, he sat down beside the corpse, and remained brooding over his crime and his loss. Three days elapsed, yet the chief continued silent and motionless; tasting no food and apparently sleepless. It was apprehended that he intended to starve himself to death; his people approached him in trembling awe, and entreated him once more to uncover his face and be comforted; but he remained unmoved. At length one of his warriors brought in a small child, and laying it on the ground, placed the foot of the Blackbird upon its neck. The heart of the gloomy savage was touched by this ap-

peal: he threw aside his robe; made an harangue upon what he had done; and from that time forward seemed to have thrown the load of grief and remorse from his mind.

He still retained his fatal and mysterious secret, and with it his terrific power; but, though able to deal death to his enemies, he could not avert it from himself or his friends. In 1802 the smallpox, that dreadful pestilence, which swept over the land like a fire over the prairies, made its appearance in the village of the Omahas. The poor savages saw with dismay the ravages of a malady, loathsome and agonizing in its details, and which set the skill and experience of their conjurers and medicine men at defiance. In a little while, two-thirds of the population were swept from the face of the earth, and the doom of the rest seemed sealed. The stoicism of the warriors was at an end; they became wild and desperate; some set fire to the village as a last means of checking the pestilence; others, in a frenzy of despair, put their wives and children to death, that they might be spared the agonies of an inevitable

disease, and that they might all go to some better country.

When the general horror and dismay was at its height, the Blackbird himself was struck down with the malady. The poor savages, when they saw their chief in danger, forgot their own miseries, and surrounded his dying bed. His dominant spirit, and his love for the white men, were evinced in his latest breath, with which he designated his place of sepulture. It was to be on a hill or promontory, upwards of four hundred feet in height, overlooking a great extent of the Missouri, from whence he had been accustomed to watch for the barks of the white men. The Missouri washes the base of the promontory, and after winding and doubling in many links and mazes in the plain below, returns to within nine hundred yards of its starting place; so that for thirty miles navigating with sail and oar, the voyager finds himself continually near to this singular promontory as if spell bound.

It was the dying command of the Blackbird

that his tomb should be upon the summit of this hill, in which he should be interred, seated on his favourite horse, that he might overlook his ancient domain, and behold the barks of the white men as they came up the river to trade with his people.

His dying orders were faithfully obeyed. His corpse was placed astride of his war-steed, and a mound raised over them on the summit of the hill. On top of the mound was erected a staff, from which fluttered the banner of the chieftain, and the scalps that he had taken in battle. When the expedition under Mr. Hunt visited that part of the country, the staff still remained with the fragments of the banner; and the superstitious rite of placing food from time to time on the mound, for the use of the deceased, was still observed by the Omahas. That rite has since fallen into disuse, for the tribe itself is almost extinct. Yet the hill of the Blackbird continues an object of veneration to the wandering savage, and a landmark to the voyager of the Missouri; and as the civilized tra-

veller comes within sight of its spell-bound crest, the mound is pointed out to him from afar, which still encloses the grim skeletons of the Indian warrior and his horse.

CHAPTER XVII.

RUMOURS OF DANGER FROM THE SIOUX TETONS—RUTHLESS CHARACTER OF THOSE SAVAGES—PIRATES OF THE MISSOURI—THEIR AFFAIR WITH CROOKS AND M'LELLAN—A TRADING EXPEDITION BROKEN UP—M'LELLAN'S VOW OF VENGEANCE—UNEASINESS IN THE CAMP—DESERTIONS—DEPARTURE FROM THE OMAHA VILLAGE—MEETING WITH JONES AND CARSON, TWO ADVENTUROUS TRAPPERS—SCIENTIFIC PURSUITS OF MESSRS. BRADBURY AND NUTTALL—ZEAL OF A BOTANIST—ADVENTURE OF MR. BRADBURY WITH A PONCA INDIAN—EXPEDIENT OF THE POCKET COMPASS AND MICROSCOPE—A MESSENGER FROM LISA—MOTIVES FOR PRESSING FORWARD.

WHILE Mr. Hunt and his party were sojourning at the village of the Omahas, three Sioux Indians of the Yankton Ahna tribe arrived, bringing unpleasant intelligence. They reported that certain bands of the Sioux Tetons, who inhabited a region many leagues further up the Missouri, were near at hand, awaiting the approach of the party, with the avowed intention of opposing their progress.

The Sioux Tetons were at that time a sort of pirates of the Missouri, who considered the

well-freighted bark of the American trader fair game. They had their own traffic with the British merchants of the northwest, who brought them regular supplies of merchandise by way of the river St. Peter. Being thus independent of the Missouri traders for their supplies, they kept no terms with them, but plundered them whenever they had an opportunity. It has been insinuated that they were prompted to these outrages by the British merchants, who wished to keep off all rivals in the Indian trade; but others allege another motive, and one savouring of a deeper policy. The Sioux, by their intercourse with the British traders, had acquired the use of fire-arms, which had given them vast superiority over other tribes higher up the Missouri. They had made themselves also, in a manner, factors for the upper tribes, supplying them at second hand, and at greatly advanced prices, with goods derived from the white men. The Sioux, therefore, saw with jealousy the American traders pushing their way up the Missouri; foreseeing that the upper tribes would thus be relieved from all dependance on them for sup-

plies; nay, what was worse, would be furnished with fire-arms, and elevated into formidable rivals.

We have already alluded to a case in which Mr. Crooks and Mr. M'Lellan had been interrupted in a trading voyage by these ruffians of the river, and, as it is in some degree connected with circumstances hereafter to be related, we shall specify it more particularly.

About two years before the time of which we are treating Crooks and M'Lellan were ascending the river in boats with a party of about forty men, bound on one of their trading expeditions to the upper tribes. In one of the bends of the river, where the channel made a deep curve under impending banks, they suddenly heard yells and shouts above them, and beheld the cliffs overhead covered with armed savages. It was a band of Sioux warriors, upwards of six hundred strong. They brandished their weapons in a menacing manner, and ordered the boats to turn back and land lower down the river. There was no disputing these commands, for they had the power to shower destruction upon the white men, with-

out risk to themselves. Crooks and McLellan, therefore, turned back with feigned alacrity; and landing, had an interview with the Sioux. The latter forbade them, under pain of exterminating hostility, from attempting to proceed up the river, but offered to trade peacefully with them if they would halt where they were. The party, being principally composed of voyageurs, was too weak to contend with so superior a force, and one so easily augmented; they pretended, therefore, to comply cheerfully with their arbitrary dictation, and immediately proceeded to cut down trees and erect a trading house. The warrior band departed for their village, which was about twenty miles distant, to collect objects of traffic; they left six or eight of their number, however, to keep watch upon the white men, and scouts were continually passing to and fro with intelligence.

Mr. Crooks saw that it would be impossible to prosecute his voyage without the danger of having his boats plundered, and a great part of his men massacred; he determined, however, not to be entirely frustrated in the objects of

his expedition. While he continued, therefore, with great apparent earnestness and assiduity, the construction of the trading house, he despatched the hunters and trappers of his party in a canoe, to make their way up the river to the original place of destination, there to busy themselves in trapping and collecting peltries, and to await his arrival at some future period.

As soon as the detachment had had sufficient time to ascend beyond the hostile country of the Sioux, Mr. Crooks suddenly broke up his feigned trading establishment, embarked his men and effects, and, after giving the astonished rear-guard of savages a galling and indignant message to take to their countrymen, pushed down the river with all speed, sparing neither oar nor paddle, day nor night, until fairly beyond the swoop of these river hawks.

What increased the irritation of Messrs. Crooks and M'Lellan at this mortifying check to their gainful enterprise, was the information that a rival trader was at the bottom of it; the Sioux, it is said, having been instigated to this outrage by Mr. Manuel Lisa, the leading partner

and agent of the Missouri Fur Company, already mentioned. This intelligence, whether true or false, so roused the fiery temper of M'Lellan, that he swore, if ever he fell in with Lisa in the Indian country, he would shoot him on the spot ; a mode of redress perfectly in unison with the character of the man, and the code of honour prevalent beyond the frontier.

If Crooks and M'Lellan had been exasperated by the insolent conduct of the Sioux Tetons, and the loss which it had occasioned, those freebooters had been no less indignant at being outwitted by the white men, and disappointed of their anticipated gains, and it was apprehended they would be particularly hostile against the present expedition, when they should learn that these gentlemen were engaged in it.

All these causes of uneasiness were concealed as much as possible from the Canadian voyageurs, lest they should become intimidated ; it was impossible, however, to prevent the rumours brought by the Indians from leaking out, and they became subjects of gossiping and exaggeration. The chief of the Omahas, too, on

returning from a hunting excursion, reported that two men had been killed some distance above, by a band of Sioux. This added to the fears that already began to be excited. The voyageurs pictured to themselves bands of fierce warriors stationed along each bank of the river, by whom they would be exposed to be shot down in their boats: or lurking hordes, who would set on them at night, and massacre them in their encampments. Some lost heart, and proposed to return, rather than fight their way, and, in a manner, run the gauntlet through the country of these piratical marauders. In fact, three men deserted while at this village. Luckily, their place was supplied by three others who happened to be there, and who were prevailed on to join the expedition by promises of liberal pay, and by being fitted out and equipped in complete style.

The irresolution and discontent visible among some of his people, arising at times almost to mutiny, and the occasional desertions which took place while thus among friendly tribes, and within reach of the frontiers, added greatly to

the anxieties of Mr. Hunt, and rendered him eager to press forward and leave a hostile tract behind him, so that it would be as perilous to return as to keep on, and no one would dare to desert.

Accordingly, on the 15th of May he departed from the village of the Omahas, and set forward towards the country of the formidable Sioux Teton. For the first five days, they had a fair and fresh breeze, and the boats made good progress. The wind then came ahead, and the river beginning to rise, and to increase in rapidity, betokened the commencement of the annual flood, caused by the melting of the snow on the Rocky mountains, and the vernal rains of the upper prairies.

As they were now entering a region where foes might be lying in wait on either bank, it was determined, in hunting for game, to confine themselves principally to the islands, which sometimes extend to considerable length, and are beautifully wooded, affording abundant pasturage and shade. On one of these they killed

three buffaloes and two elks, and, halting on the edge of a beautiful prairie, made a sumptuous hunter's repast. They had not long resumed their boats and pulled along the river banks, when they descried a canoe approaching, navigated by two men, whom, to their surprise, they ascertained to be white men. They proved to be two of those strange and fearless wanderers of the wilderness, the trappers. Their names were Benjamin Jones and Alexander Carson. They had been for two years past hunting and trapping near the head of the Missouri, and were thus floating for thousands of miles in a cockle shell, down a turbulent stream, through regions infested with savage tribes, yet apparently as easy and unconcerned as if navigating securely in the midst of civilization.

The acquisition of two such hardy, experienced, and dauntless hunters, was peculiarly desirable at the present moment. They needed but little persuasion. The wilderness is the home of the trapper; like the sailor, he cares but little to which point of the compass he steers; and

Jones and Carson readily abandoned their voyage to St. Louis, and turned their faces towards the Rocky mountains and the Pacific.

The two naturalists, Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Nuttall, who had joined the expedition at St. Louis, still accompanied it, and pursued their researches on all occasions. Mr. Nuttall seems to have been exclusively devoted to his scientific pursuits. He was a zealous botanist, and all his enthusiasm was awakened at beholding a new world, as it were, opening upon him in the boundless prairies, clad in the vernal and variegated robe of unknown flowers. Whenever the boats landed at meal times, or for any temporary purpose, he would spring on shore and set out on a hunt for new specimens. Every plant or flower of a rare or unknown species was eagerly seized as a prize. Delighted with the treasures spreading themselves out before him, he went groping and stumbling along among a wilderness of sweets, forgetful of every thing but his immediate pursuit, and had often to be sought after when the boats were about to resume their course. At such times he would be found far

off in the prairies, or up the course of some petty stream laden with plants of all kinds.

The Canadian voyageurs, who are a class of people that know nothing out of their immediate line, and with constitutional levity make a jest of any thing they cannot understand, were extremely puzzled by this passion for collecting what they considered mere useless weeds. When they saw the worthy botanist coming back heavy laden with his specimens, and treasuring them up as carefully as a miser would his hoard, they used to make merry among themselves at his expense, regarding him as some whimsical kind of madman.

Mr. Bradbury was less exclusive in his tastes and habits, and combined the hunter and sportsman with the naturalist. He took his rifle or his fowling piece with him in his geological researches, conformed to the hardy and rugged habits of the men around him, and of course gained favour in their eyes. He had a strong relish for incident and adventure, was curious in observing savage manners, and savage life, and ready to join any hunting or

other excursion. Even now, that the expedition was proceeding through a dangerous neighbourhood, he could not check his propensity to ramble. Having observed, on the evening of the 22d of May, that the river ahead made a great bend which would take up the navigation of the following day, he determined to profit by the circumstance. On the morning of the 22d, therefore, instead of embarking, he filled his shot pouch with parched corn, for provisions, and set off to cross the neck on foot and meet the boats in the afternoon at the opposite side of the bend. Mr. Hunt felt uneasy at his venturing thus alone, and reminded him that he was in an enemy's country; but Mr. Bradbury made light of the danger, and started off cheerily upon his ramble. His day was passed pleasantly in traversing a beautiful tract, making botanical and geological researches, and observing the habits of an extensive village of prairie dogs, at which he made several ineffectual shots, without considering the risk he run of attracting the attention of any savages that might be lurking in the neigh-

bourhood. In fact he had totally forgotten the Sioux Tetons, and all the perils of the country, when, about the middle of the afternoon, as he stood near the river bank, and was looking out for the boat, he suddenly felt a hand laid on his shoulder. Starting and turning round, he beheld a naked savage with a bow bent, and the arrow pointed at his breast. In an instant his gun was levelled and his hand upon the lock. The Indian drew his bow still further, but forbore to launch the shaft. Mr. Bradbury, with admirable presence of mind, reflected that the savage, if hostile in his intents, would have shot him without giving him a chance of defence; he paused, therefore, and held out his hand. The other took it in sign of friendship, and demanded in the Osage language whether he was a Big Knife, or American. He answered in the affirmative, and inquired whether the other were a Sioux. To his great relief he found that he was a Ponca. By this time two other Indians came running up, and all three laid hold of Mr. Bradbury and seemed disposed to compel him to go off with them among the

hills. He resisted, and sitting down on a sand hill, contrived to amuse them with a pocket compass. When the novelty of this was exhausted they again seized him, but he now produced a small microscope. This new wonder again fixed the attention of the savages, who have far more curiosity than it has been the custom to allow them. While thus engaged, one of them suddenly leaped up and gave a war-whoop. The hand of the hardy naturalist was again on his gun and he was prepared to make battle when the Indian pointed down the river and revealed the true cause of his yell. It was the mast of one of the boats appearing above the low willows which bordered the stream. Mr. Bradbury felt infinitely relieved by the sight. The Indians on their part now showed signs of apprehension, and were disposed to run away; but he assured them of good treatment and something to drink if they would accompany him on board of the boats. They lingered for a time, but disappeared before the boats came to land.

On the following morning they appeared

at the camp accompanied by several of their tribe. With them came also a white man, who announced himself as a messenger bearing missives for Mr. Hunt. In fact he brought a letter from Mr. Manuel Lisa, partner and agent of the Missouri Fur Company. As has already been mentioned, this gentleman was going in search of Mr. Henry and his party, who had been dislodged from the forks of the Missouri by the Blackfeet Indians, and had shifted his post somewhere beyond the Rocky mountains. Mr. Lisa had left St. Louis three weeks after Mr. Hunt, and having heard of the hostile intentions of the Sioux, had made the greatest exertions to overtake him, that they might pass through the dangerous part of the river together. He had twenty stout oarsmen in his service, and they plied their oars so vigorously, that he had reached the Omaha village just four days after the departure of Mr. Hunt. From this place he despatched the messenger in question, trusting to his overtaking the barges as they toiled up against the stream, and were delayed by the windings

of the river. The purport of his letter was to entreat Mr. Hunt to wait until he could come up with him, that they might unite their forces and be a protection to each other in their perilous course through the country of the Sioux. In fact, as it was afterwards ascertained, Lisa was apprehensive that Mr. Hunt would do him some ill office with the Sioux bands, securing his own passage through their country by pretending that he with whom they were accustomed to trade, was on his way to them with a plentiful supply of goods. He feared, too, that Crooks and M'Lellan would take this opportunity to retort upon him the perfidy which they accused him of having used, two years previously among these very Sioux. In this respect, however, he did them signal injustice. There was no such thing as covert design or treachery in their thought; but M'Lellan when he heard that Lisa was on his way up the river, renewed his open threat of shooting him the moment he met him on Indian land.

The representations made by Crooks and

M'Lellan of the treachery they had experienced, or fancied, on the part of Lisa, had great weight with Mr. Hunt, especially when he recollected the obstacles that had been thrown in his own way by that gentleman at St. Louis. He doubted, therefore, the fair dealing of Lisa, and feared that, should they enter the Sioux country together, the latter might make use of his influence with that tribe, as he had in the case of Crooks and M'Lellan, and instigate them to oppose his progress up the river.

He sent back, therefore, an answer calculated to beguile Lisa, assuring him that he would wait for him at the Poncas village, which was but a little distance in advance ; but, no sooner had the messenger departed, than he pushed forward with all diligence, barely stopping at the village to procure a supply of dried buffalo meat, and hastening to leave the other party as far behind as possible, thinking there was less to be apprehended from the open hostility of Indian foes, than from the quiet strategy of an Indian trader.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAMP GOSSIP—DESERTERS—RECRUITS—KENTUCKY HUNTERS—A VETERAN WOODMAN—TIDINGS OF MR. HENRY—DANGER FROM THE BLACKFEET—ALTERATION OF PLANS—SCENERY OF THE RIVER—BUFFALO ROADS—IRON ORE—COUNTRY OF THE SIOUX—A LAND OF DANGER—APPREHENSIONS OF THE VOYAGEURS—INDIAN SCOUTS—THREATENED HOSTILITIES—A COUNCIL OF WAR—AN ARRAY OF BATTLE—A PARLEY—THE PIPE OF PEACE—SPEECH MAKING.

It was about noon when the party left the Poncas village, about a league beyond which they passed the mouth of the Quicourt, or Rapid river (called, in the original French, *l'Eau Qui Court*). After having proceeded some distance further, they landed, and encamped for the night. In the evening camp, the voyageurs gossiped, as usual, over the events of the day? and especially over intelligence picked up among the Poncas. These Indians had confirmed the previous reports of

the hostile intentions of the Sioux, and had assured them that five tribes, or bands, of that fierce nation were actually assembled higher up the river, and waiting to cut them off. This evening gossip, and the terrific stories of Indian warfare to which it gave rise, produced a strong effect upon the imaginations of the irresolute; and on the morning it was discovered that the two men, who had joined the party at the Maha village, and been so bounteously fitted out, had deserted in the course of the night, carrying with them all their equipments. As it was known that one of them could not swim, it was hoped that the banks of the Quicourt river would bring them to a halt. A general pursuit was therefore instituted, but without success.

On the following morning (May 26th), as they were all on shore, breakfasting on one of the beautiful banks of the river, they observed two canoes descending along the opposite side. By the aid of spyglasses, they ascertained that there were two white men in one of the canoes, and one in the other. A gun was discharged,

which called the attention of the voyagers, who crossed over. They proved to be three Kentucky hunters, of the true "dreadnought" stamp. Their names were Edward Robinson, John Hoback, and Jacob Rizner. Robinson was a veteran backwoodman, sixty-six years of age. He had been one of the first settlers of Kentucky, and engaged in many of the conflicts of the Indians on "The Bloody Ground." In one of these battles he had been scalped, and he still wore a handkerchief bound round his head to protect the part. These men had passed several years in the upper wilderness. They had been in the service of the Missouri Company under Mr. Henry, and had crossed the Rocky mountains with him in the preceding year, when driven from his post on the Missouri, by the hostilities of the Blackfeet. After crossing the mountains, Mr. Henry had established himself on one of the head branches of the Columbia river. There they had remained with him for some months, hunting and trapping, until, having satisfied their wandering propensities, they felt disposed to return to their families and

comfortable homes which they had left in Kentucky. They had accordingly made their way back across the mountains, and down the rivers, and were in full career for St. Louis, when thus suddenly interrupted. The sight of a powerful party of traders, trappers, hunters, and voyageurs, well armed and equipped, furnished at all points, in high health and spirits, and banqueting lustily on the green margin of the river, was a spectacle equally stimulating to these veteran backwoodmen with the glorious array of a campaigning army to an old soldier ; but when they learned the grand scope and extent of the enterprise in hand, it was irresistible : homes and families, and all the charms of green Kentucky vanished from their thoughts ; they cast loose their canoes to drift down the stream, and joyfully enlisted in the band of adventurers. They engaged on similar terms with some of the other hunters. The company was to fit them out, and keep them supplied with the requisite equipments and munitions, and they were to yield one half of the produce of their hunting and trapping.

The addition of three such stanch recruits was extremely acceptable at this dangerous part of the river. The knowledge of the country which they had acquired, also, in their journeys, and hunting excursions along the rivers and among the Rocky mountains, was all important; in fact, the information derived from them induced Mr. Hunt to alter his future course. He had hitherto intended to proceed by the route taken by Lewis and Clarke in their famous exploring expedition, ascending the Missouri to its forks, and thence going, by land, across the mountains. These men informed him, however, that on taking that course he would have to pass through the country infested by the savage tribe of the Blackfeet, and would be exposed to their hostilities; they being, as has already been observed, exasperated to deadly animosity against the whites, on account of the death of one of their tribe by the hands of Captain Lewis. They advised him rather to pursue a route more to the southward, being the same by which they had returned. This would carry them over the

mountains about where the head waters of the Platte and the Yellowstone take their rise, at a place much more easy and practicable than that where Lewis and Clarke had crossed. In pursuing this course, also, he would pass through a country abounding with game, where he would have a better chance of procuring a constant supply of provisions than by the other route, and would run less risk of molestation from the Blackfeet. Should he adopt this advice, it would be better for him to abandon the river at the Aricara town, at which he would arrive in the course of a few days. As the Indians of that town possessed horses in abundance, he might purchase a sufficient number of them for his great journey overland, which would commence at that place.

After reflecting on this advice, and consulting with his associates, Mr. Hunt came to the determination to follow the route thus pointed out, in which the hunters engaged to pilot him.

The party continued their voyage with delightful May weather. The prairies bordering

on the river were gaily painted with innumerable flowers, exhibiting the motley confusion of colours of a Turkey carpet. The beautiful islands also, on which they occasionally halted, presented the appearance of mingled grove and garden. The trees were often covered with clambering grape vines in blossom, which perfumed the air. Between the stately masses of the groves were grassy lawns and glades, studded with flowers, or interspersed with rose bushes in full bloom. These islands were often the resort of the buffalo, the elk, and the antelope, who had made innumerable paths among the trees and thickets, which had the effect of the mazy walks and alleys of parks and shrubberies. Sometimes, where the river passed between high banks and bluffs, the roads, made by the tramp of buffaloes for many ages along the face of the heights, looked like so many well-travelled highways. At other places, the banks were banded with great veins of iron ore, laid bare by the abrasion of the river. At one place the course of the river was nearly in a straight line for about fifteen miles. The banks

sloped gently to its margin, without a single tree, but bordered with grass and herbage of a vivid green. Along each bank, for the whole fifteen miles, extended a stripe, one hundred yards in breadth, of a deep rusty brown, indicating an inexhaustible bed of iron, through the centre of which the Missouri had worn its way. Indications of the continuance of this bed were afterwards observed higher up the river. It is, in fact, one of the mineral magazines which nature has provided in the heart of this vast realm of fertility, and which, in connexion with the immense beds of coal on the same river, seem garnered up as the elements of the future wealth and power of the mighty west.

The sight of these mineral treasures greatly excited the curiosity of Mr. Bradbury, and it was tantalizing to him to be checked in his scientific researches, and obliged to forego his usual rambles on shore; but they were now entering the fated country of the Sioux Tetons, in which it was dangerous to wander about unguarded.

This country extends for some days' journey

along the river, and consists of vast prairies, here and there diversified by swelling hills, and cut up by ravines, the channels of turbid streams in the rainy seasons, but almost destitute of water during the heats of summer. Here and there, on the sides of the hills, or along the alluvial borders and bottoms of the ravines, are groves and skirts of forest; but for the most part the country presented to the eye a boundless waste, covered with herbage, but without trees.

The soil of this immense region is strongly impregnated with sulphur, copperas, alum, and glauber salts; its various earths impart a deep tinge to the streams which drain it, and these, with the crumbling of the banks along the Missouri, give to the waters of that river much of the colouring matter with which they are clouded.

Over this vast tract the roving bands of the Sioux Tetons hold their vagrant sway; subsisting by the chase of the buffalo, the elk, the deer, and the antelope, and waging ruthless warfare with other wandering tribes.

As the boats made their way up the stream

bordered by this land of danger, many of the Canadian voyageurs, whose fears had been awakened, would regard with a distrustful eye the boundless waste extending on each side. All however was silent, and apparently untenanted by a human being. Now and then a herd of deer would be seen feeding tranquilly among the flowery herbage, or a line of buffaloes, like a caravan on its march, moving across the distant profile of the prairie. The Canadians, however, began to apprehend an ambush in every thicket, and to regard the broad, tranquil plain as a sailor eyes some shallow and perfidious sea, which, though smooth and safe to the eye, conceals the lurking rock or treacherous shoal. The very name of a Sioux became a watchword of terror. Not an elk, a wolf, or any other animal, could appear on the hills, but the boats resounded with exclamations from stem to stern, "*voilà les Sioux !*" "*voilà les Sioux !*" (There are the Sioux ! There are the Sioux !) Whenever it was practicable, the night encampment was on some island in the centre of the stream.

On the morning of the 31st of May, as the travellers were breakfasting on the right bank of the river, the usual alarm was given, but with more reason, as two Indians actually made their appearance on a bluff on the opposite or northeast side, and harangued them in a loud voice. As it was impossible at that distance to distinguish what they said, Mr. Hunt, after breakfast, crossed the river with Pierre Dorion, the interpreter, and advanced boldly to converse with them, while the rest remained watching, in mute suspense, the movements of the parties. As soon as Mr. Hunt landed, one of the Indians disappeared behind the hill, but shortly reappeared on horseback, and went scouring off across the heights. Mr. Hunt held some conference with the remaining savage, and then recrossed the river to his party.

These two Indians proved to be spies or scouts of a large war-party encamped about a league off, and numbering two hundred and eighty lodges, or about six hundred warriors, of three different tribes of Sioux; the Yangtons Ahna, the Tetons Bois-brulé, and the Tetons

Min-na-kine-azzo. They expected daily to be reinforced by two other tribes, and had been waiting eleven days for the arrival of Mr. Hunt's party, with a determination to oppose their progress up the river; being resolved to prevent all trade with the white men with their enemies the Aricaras, Mandans, and Minatarees. The Indian who had galloped off on horseback had gone to give notice of the approach of the party, so that they might now look out for some fierce scenes with those piratical savages, of whom they had received so many formidable accounts.

The party braced up their spirits to the encounter, and re-embarking, pulled resolutely up the stream. An island for some time intervened between them and the opposite side of the river; but on clearing the upper end, they came in full view of the hostile shore. There was a ridge of hills down which the savages were pouring in great numbers, some on horseback, and some on foot. Reconnoitring them with the aid of glasses, they perceived that they were all in warlike array, painted and decorated

for battle. Their weapons were bows and arrows, and a few short carbines, and most of them had round shields. Altogether they had a wild and gallant appearance, and, taking possession of a point which commanded the river, ranged themselves along the bank as if prepared to dispute the passage.

At sight of this formidable front of war, Mr. Hunt and his companions held council together. It was plain that the rumours they had heard were correct, and the Sioux were determined to oppose their progress by force of arms. To attempt to elude them and continue along the river was out of the question. The strength of the mid-current was too violent to be withstood, and the boats were obliged to ascend along the river banks. These banks were often high and perpendicular, affording the savages frequent stations, from whence, safe themselves, and almost unseen, they might shower down their missiles upon the boats below, and retreat at will, without danger from pursuit. Nothing apparently remained, therefore but to fight or turn back. The Sioux far outnumbered them,

it is true, but their own party was about sixty strong, well armed and supplied with ammunition; and, beside their guns and rifles, they had a swivel and two howitzers mounted in the boats. Should they succeed in breaking this Indian force by one vigorous assault, it was likely they would be deterred from making any future attack of consequence. The fighting alternative was, therefore, instantly adopted, and the boats pulled to shore nearly opposite to the hostile force. Here the arms were all examined and put in order. The swivel and howitzers were then loaded with powder and discharged, to let the savages know by the report how formidably they were provided. The noise echoed along the shores of the river, and must have startled the warriors, who were only accustomed to the sharp reports of rifles. The same pieces were then loaded with as many bullets as they would probably bear; after which the whole party embarked, and pulled across the river. The Indians remained watching them in silence, their painted forms and visages glaring in the sun, and their feathers

fluttering in the breeze. The poor Canadians eyed them with rueful glances, and now and then a fearful ejaculation would escape them. "Parbleu! this is a sad scrape we are in, brother!" would one mutter to the next oarsman. "Ay, ay," the other would reply, "we are not going to a wedding, my friend!"

When the boats arrived within rifle shot, the hunters and other fighting personages on board seized their weapons, and prepared for action. As they rose to fire, a confusion took place among the savages. They displayed their buffalo robes, raised them with both hands above their heads, and then spread them before them on the ground. At sight of this, Pierre Dorion eagerly cried out to the party not to fire, as this movement was a peaceful signal, and an invitation to a parley. Immediately about a dozen of the principal warriors, separating from the rest, descended to the edge of the river, lighted a fire, seated themselves in a semicircle round it, and, displaying the calumet, invited the party to land. Mr. Hunt now called a council of the partners on board of his

boat. The question was, whether to trust to the amicable overtures of these ferocious people? It was determined in the affirmative; for, otherwise, there was no alternative but to fight them. The main body of the party were ordered to remain on board of the boats, keeping within shot, and prepared to fire in case of any signs of treachery; while Mr. Hunt and the other partners (M'Kenzie, Crooks, and M'Lellan), proceeded to land, accompanied by the interpreter and Mr. Bradbury. The chiefs who awaited them on the margin of the river remained seated in their semicircle, without stirring a limb or moving a muscle, motionless as so many statues. Mr. Hunt and his companions advanced without hesitation, and took their seats on the sand so as to complete the circle. The band of warriors who lined the banks above stood looking down in silent groups and clusters, some ostentatiously equipped and decorated, others entirely naked, but fantastically painted, and all variously armed.

The pipe of peace was now brought forward with due ceremony. The bowl was of a species

of red stone resembling porphyry ; the stem was six feet in length, decorated with tufts of horsehair dyed red. The pipebearer stepped within the circle, lighted the pipe, held it towards the sun, then towards the different points of the compass, after which he handed it to the principal chief. The latter smoked a few whiffs, then holding the head of the pipe in his hand, offered the other end to Mr. Hunt, and to each one successively in the circle. When all had smoked, it was considered that an assurance of good faith and amity had been interchanged. Mr. Hunt now made a speech in French, which was interpreted as he proceeded by Pierre Dorion. He informed the Sioux of the real object of the expedition of himself and his companions, which was, not to trade with any of the tribes up the river, but to cross the mountains to the great salt lake in the west, in search of some of their brothers, whom they had not seen for eleven months. That he had heard of the intention of the Sioux to oppose his passage, and was prepared, as they might see, to effect it at all

hazards; nevertheless, his feelings towards the Sioux were friendly, in proof of which he had brought them a present of tobacco and corn. So saying, he ordered about fifteen carottes of tobacco, and as many bags of corn, to be brought from the boat and laid in a heap near the council fire.

The sight of these presents mollified the chieftain, who had doubtless been previously rendered considerate by the resolute conduct of the white men, the judicious disposition of their little armament, the completeness of their equipments, and the compact array of battle which they presented. He made a speech in reply, in which he stated the object of their hostile assemblage, which had been merely to prevent supplies of arms and ammunition from going to the Aricaras, Mandans, and Minatarees, with whom they were at war; but being now convinced that the party were carrying no supplies of the kind, but merely proceeding in quest of their brothers beyond the mountains, they would not impede them in their voyage. He concluded by thanking them for their pre-

sent, and advising them to encamp on the opposite side of the river, as he had some young men among his warriors for whose discretion he could not be answerable, and who might be troublesome.

Here ended the conference: they all arose, shook hands, and parted. Mr. Hunt and his companions re-embarked, and the boats proceeded on their course unmolested.

END OF VOL. I.









